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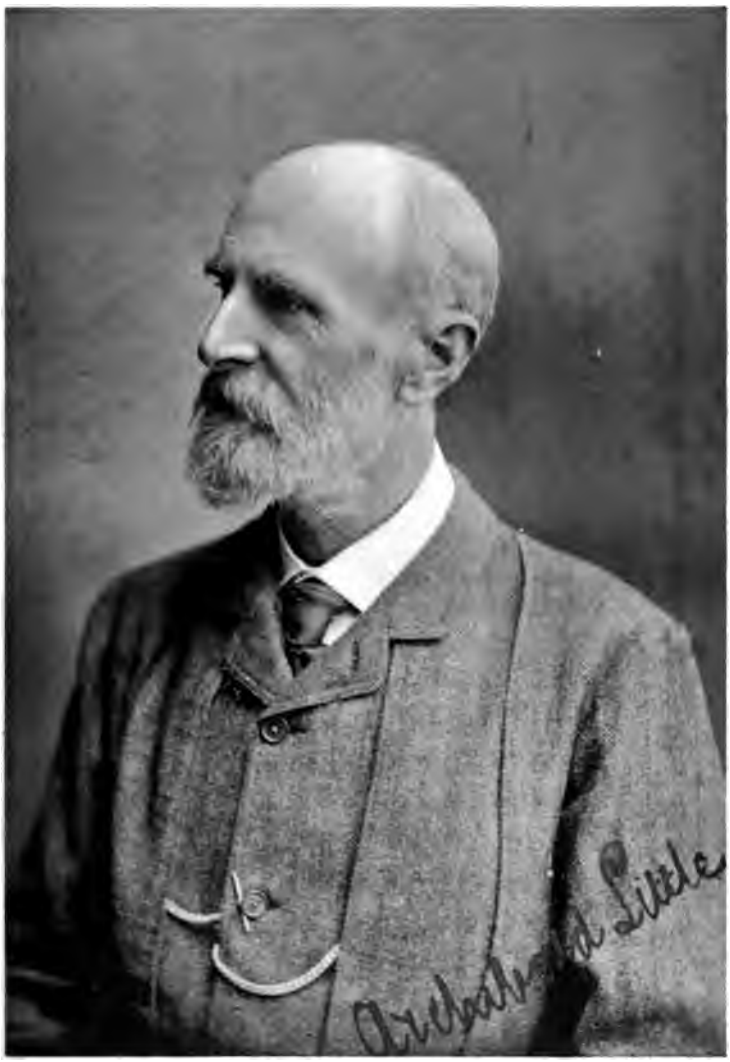

THE AUTHOR

# MOUNT OMI AND BEYOND

## A RECORD OF TRAVEL ON THE THIBETAN BORDER

BY

ARCHIBALD JOHN LITTLE, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF

"THROUGH THE YANGTSE GORGES," ETC.

WITH A MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1901

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# PREFACE

In publishing an account of what might almost be called "A Walking Tour on the Thibetan Border," I tender no addition to the records of geographical exploration, but simply a picture of China as it exists far removed from Western influence—a China which must ere long pass away as old Japan has done, though with slower steps. Many travellers have passed through the country on their way to and from Thibet, but few have lingered over the Chinese portion as we did, and none have travelled precisely the same route.

China is often regarded as a land of plains and paddy-fields, and it is a surprise to many dwellers on the Coast to learn that, barring the small Cheng Tu plateau in Northern Szechuan, there is scarcely an acre of level ground west of Ichang—nothing but range upon range of precipitous mountains. In penetrating these and in living in a far inland city like Chungking, one finds one's self *en plein moyen age*, and is enabled to realise the lives of our ancestors before the Reformation awakened men to think for themselves, and started them on the course which has left the Chinese, once our superiors, so far behind. We realise there how our own ancestors managed to live contentedly, as they undoubtedly did, in such, to us, utter discomfort. No newspapers, no public post, no roads beyond foot trails, no street

cleaning, no drains, no fires in winter, and no ice in summer. Against these drawbacks, however, we have the brilliant costumes of the Middle Ages pervading China to-day, all but the very poorest being richly and gracefully clad, while our modern dress is as unbecoming as our street architecture unattractive. The æsthetic feeling had the upper hand in our Middle Ages as it has in China to-day. We admire but with all our progress cannot rival the Gothic buildings of our rude forefathers. Chinese buildings seem to grow up intrinsically picturesque and in exquisite harmony with the surroundings among which they stand. Any one who has had the good fortune to peruse Garnier's Exploration of the Mékong must have been impressed by the romantic beauty displayed in his views of the mountain cities in Yunnan and Eastern Thibet. It is this harmony of Chinese towns and hamlets with surrounding nature that adds so much to the charm of the mountain views in inhabited districts. In uninhabited regions one has at least Nature pure and undefiled—not scarred by a funicular railway nor blistered with mammoth hotels.

Returning to the coast after a few years in the interior, it is hard to remember in what an incredibly backward condition ninety-nine hundredths of this vast and populous Empire yet remain. In Shanghai and the larger Treaty Ports, where the magic wand of Western progress has transformed Chinese stagnation into a bustling and prosperous activity, one fancies one's self in Europe until (as few residents do) one ventures out of the "settlements" into the native cities alongside, where filth and decay still reign supreme. The results of the war with Japan are gradually breaking down, in a friendly, or, where needs must, a forcible way, the opposition of the officials to the enlightenment of their people as to better things. Hence the life I have here

described is nearing its end. Whether this end will be utter decay or a new life the next century will show. At present the Chinese, under their generally incompetent and corrupt Mandarinate, are like sheep without a shepherd. The wolves are howling round them. Will a *Chiu seng Chu*, the Messiah of Chinese lore, arise and save them, or will the fate of Poland overtake them? Any change from their present state can hardly but be for the better.

A simple remedy there is, had the officials but the sense to grasp it, namely, the opening up of China to European enterprise in the same way that Japan has thrown herself open by the late Treaty Revision. By this means order and progress may yet be infused into China, her immense resources be developed, and she be saved from the decay and decrepitude that have crept over her. The Western Powers had gone on propping up the crazy sham until a shove from the Japanese capsized it. The question before us residents in China now is: Will our representatives be instructed to work for progress, or will they be told to submit to snubs and to do their best as hitherto to support all the old abuses, fearing to face the unknown future, led by events instead of trying to guide them?

My wife was my companion on the trip to Ta Chien Lu, and to her energy in photographing under most difficult conditions and the trying interruptions of unruly crowds I am indebted for the illustrations that decorate this book.

These chapters originally appeared, as they were written, in the columns of the *North China Herald*, to the kindness of whose editor I am indebted for leave to republish them. I am encouraged to hope that they may now find approval among the larger circle of home readers.

The foregoing lines were written in 1899 before my return

to China. Since then events have moved apace. Our future here depends it seems to me upon the action of the Allies in the North. If they are satisfied with the capture of Peking, and are bamboozled into a peace and a new treaty yielding on paper everything demanded, it will be 1860 over again, with the addition that the Chinese are now roused and it will only be a question of waiting until they are better and more universally armed to make another and possibly successful attempt to throw off the foreign yoke under which they now labour—officials and people alike.

But if the Allies with Britain and Japan in the van persevere until they have caught the Empress and Prince Tuan and the rest and bring them to trial, and set Kwanghsü or a "progressive" nominee on the throne—consistently opposing partition meanwhile—then we may hope for the real opening up of the country with resulting prosperity and peace.

ARCHIBALD JOHN LITTLE.

CHUNGKING,
*September* 1900.

*The best thanks of the Author are due and are hereby tendered to the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society and to Mrs. Isabella Bishop for permission to reproduce the map which accompanies this volume.*

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# INTRODUCTION

CHUNGKING,* under present conditions of foreign residence there, is at no time a desirable place to pass the summer in. In 1892, to the perennial drawback of confinement in a low-roofed Chinese house, situated in what is stated to be the most closely packed hive of Chinese humanity in the Empire, was added that of a severe epidemic of cholera. Every morning the streets were blocked with funerals, and coffins seemed to form the staple article of trade, all other business stagnating for the time. Attempts to gain a breath of fresh air by a promenade outside the walls were frustrated by the pervading odour of freshly made graves, which were being daily squeezed in between the crowd of old graves, covering every foot of the surrounding hills for a radius of some miles, the dead far outnumbering the living. As the ground is sandstone rock, bare in many places, in others lightly clothed with thin soil supporting a poor weedy grass on which browse numerous half-starved cattle, the new graves are little more than coffins hidden by a scanty covering of graveyard mould filched from the surrounding tombs. Of the old graves many are empty, while in others gaping skeletons are exposed to the light of day. In the steamy windless atmosphere peculiar to Szechuan such conditions do not favour the dissemination of ozone, and amply suffice to account for the lassitude and general ill-health of the foreign residents at this season. We ourselves found

* Chungking, the chief trading town in the province of Szechuan, on the Yangtze river, 1500 miles from the sea, is the furthest point as yet reached by steamers.

country walks yield us little more than a change of unpleasant odours, and came to the conclusion, none too soon, that if we were not to succumb to the "seediness" which was steadily lowering our vitality, we must make an effort and place ourselves outside the encircling ring of grave mounds and, if possible, attain an altitude where the air is not in that state of stagnation which is its constant condition at Chungking.

It is true that on the opposite bank of the Yangtze we have a range of limestone mountains rising to a height of 1700 feet above the river level—itself some 600 feet above the ocean; and that cool nights and a day temperature 8° to 10° lower than that of the city are to be had on the summit. But to reside there, one has only the choice between a poor farm-house with mud floor, shared with the pigs and poultry, or a damp close room in a temple, generally crowded with visitors in the summer season. Even these amenities are only grudgingly accorded to the foreigner, and those of our residents who have tried them do not seem inclined to repeat their experience. Of course, a bungalow in a clearing amidst the pines, dwarf oak, and azalea bushes, with which the higher ridges are covered, would form a charming retreat from the filth and discomfort of the city; but the amiable Chinese officials conscientiously oppose any such anomalies as are not provided for in the treaty, and so were not then to be thought of. Hence, to obtain fresh air the only plan is to take up one's staff, and—in the words of the passport furnished by a compassionate Government to "*You-lih*"—"roam and pass on," availing oneself of such shelter as the numerous native inns scattered along the great highways afford. In the by-ways one is often dependent on a chance farm-house or village temple, which, though generally poor and rough and ill-furnished with food at the best of times, yet affords an agreeable respite from the all-pervading dirt of the inns and the insatiable curiosity of their inmates—both two-legged and many-legged.

The nearest highlands, meaning by that term anything over 5000 feet, easily accessible, are the sacred mountains of Omi,

situated in the Kiating prefecture, about one hundred and fifty miles west of Chungking as the crow flies. These form the outermost western buttresses of the Thibetan plateau, at the foot of which extends the great red basin of Szechuan, whose red sandstone waves are bounded by and break, as it were, against the towering cliffs of Omi. One thus passes suddenly from the steaming plain (if one may so call its rugged sandstone hills by comparison) of Szechuan to the breezy heights of the mountains, which extend unbroken to the Himalayas, and far beyond—mounting this great natural wall by an artificial staircase of some 20,000 slippery limestone steps. Once there one is in a paradise of Nature, seasoned by the romance of history, the traditions of Buddhism at the time when it was a living, growing faith, and the æsthetic results of this vitality, which have survived in the innumerable ruins of a glorious past, which still decorate the mountain. But to get there entails a land journey of fourteen days, or a boat journey, towing against the July current of the swollen Yangtze, of at least a month. Neither route is attractive in the dog-days, even apart from the risk of sun-stroke; but failing a railroad to take us there in three or four hours, or a carriage-road by which one might drive there in three or four days, we fall back on the time-honoured sedan-chair, and prepare ourselves for a fortnight's discomfort in anticipation of a month or more of healthful enjoyment afterwards. How our anticipations were fulfilled is shown in the following daily record of our progress.

# CHAPTER I

## CHUNGKING TO THE BRINE WELLS RIVER

DEPARTURE from Chungking—Rock Fortress of Fu Tou Kuan—High Road to the Capital—Cross Ranges—Market Town of Pai She Yi—Palace of Heaven—Paddy-fields—The Weald of Kent—Dragon Supported Bridge—Robbers' Heads Exposed—City of Eternal Streams—Pi Pa Wo'ehr, Guitar Nest—A Muddy Bath—Banyans—Peaceful Hamlet—Grave-grounds—City of Lung Chang—Fellow Travellers—Lion Bridge—Coal-mine—Fossil Bridge—Millet—Samshu—Grass-cloth—Triumphal Arches—Monolith Transported on Men's Shoulders, Gun-barrel Tree—Assisi Scenery—On Lake Ferry—The Brine Wells River—Filthy Quarters.

ON July 7, 1897, after a last good home-breakfast, we set off in the usual smoky mist of Chungking at 7.15 A.M., each in a sedan-chair with four bearers, the blue cotton canopy over each extending for a distance of six yards from back to front; our Kwanse or major-domo in a chair with three bearers; seven coolies carrying each eighty catties (107 lbs.) of our clothing, bedding, money, and "stores" for three months' consumption; one coolie headman, sent by the hong contracting for the labour and engaging to land us in the city of Omi Hien in thirteen days; and our house coolie, "Old Four"—these two latter carrying nothing. It is well to remember that the only coin current in the Chinese Empire is the copper "cash," of which a thousand strung by their centre hole on a straw rope makes a "string" or *tiao*. Such a string weighs 8 lbs. Ten strings equal in value just a sovereign, and form a load of 80 lbs. Thus the happy possessor of one pound sterling, if he takes it with him in coin of the realm, requires a special

High Road to the Capital of Szechuan (Cheng Tu), showing Grave-mounds on each side, Bungalow and Crenelated Fort (Tchai) on Hill-top.

porter to carry it. Silver coin, of course, can be exchanged for "cash" in the large towns, but the traveller's payments are all in copper cash.

A thunderstorm the previous evening had happily lowered the temperature from 92° to 80°, and our cavalcade trotted off gaily in the fresh morning air, through the everlasting wet rock-floored streets, half an hour's journey from our house to the West Gate which leads to the only land road out of the river-circled city—a gateway filthy with the droppings of the endless trains of coolies carrying water and soft coal in, and the town refuse out, past the long straggling suburb, on to the picturesque terrace with its carved stone balustrade overhanging the cliff that here bounds the Great River eddying and swirling below; at this season a cataract of liquid purple-coloured mud. Out in the country and once past the graves clean pavement and fresh air tempt us to leave our chairs and allow our willing bearers to climb the long staircase that leads up and through Fu Tou Kuan without our load. We persevere, and are rewarded by arriving at the top of the hill drenched with perspiration, such as is invariably the result of motion in the hot-house air of this province. Fu Tou Kuan, the walled town or fortress built on the "neck" of the Chungking peninsula—the point where an elbow of the Yangtze nearly reaches to a corresponding elbow of its affluent the Kia-ling, separated by this precipitous hill rising 500 feet above the water—forms the sole approach to Chungking from the land side. There are a few straggling houses on its main street, but it is architecturally remarkable for its *paifang* (stone-archways) and huge monumental tablets of carved sandstone.

We traversed a richly cultivated but comparatively uninteresting country of terraced paddy-fields, interspersed with thick groves of bamboo, winged walnut, and cypress surrounding the many villages and walled-in country streets. We left Fu Tou Kuan at 9.30 (15 *li*), and after another 15 *li* across this lower country where we found the air, even in our awning-protected chairs, very oppressive, arrived at the village of

Tsan Pu at 11 A.M. Here, in a very decent Chinese inn, we tiffined, finding the inn all the better because of the delightful surprise of a courier from Chungking catching us up with letters and papers. Any one who has travelled in distant regions will know the intense delight this last greeting to be received from our friends for many a long day naturally gave us, and how thoroughly we read those newspapers. At one we started again and traversed the nearest to Chungking of the remarkable "cross ranges" that intersect the sandstone plateau of Szechuan in a N.E. and S.W. direction. Steep flights of steps led us up to the pass—just 1000 feet from the foot by my aneroid, through a group of steep fir-clad hills rising 300 to 400 feet higher. Here the paddy-fields ascend in serried terraces nearly as high as the pass, and above their bright emerald green the shining white-striped leaves of millet and miniature fields of spring wheat, bare rugged mountain limestone crowning the summits. The difference in temperature was most marked, the air on the top being delightfully fresh and cool. Reaching the other side we looked over another low but most picturesquely broken sandstone basin, dotted with farms and villages, among which was pointed out to us the market-town of Paisheyi—our destination for the night—the horizon bounded by another similar "cross range" looking deep blue in the distance, and over which our to-morrow's path lay, our W.S.W. course being at right angles to its axis. It is characteristic that the Chinese do not lower their passes by cuttings and tunnels as the Japanese do.

Descending rapidly by another long winding staircase we re-entered the hot-house, and shortly before sunset reached our not uncomfortable inn, before which we found our gaudy hong-flag hoisted by our *avant courrier*, covered with the decorated Chinese characters informing all the world and his wife that a great British merchant is about to take up his abode there. A heavy and delightfully cooling thunderstorm wound up a day which we found far less disagreeable than we had any right to anticipate at this season.

*July* 8, 1892.—Up at four by candle-light; took an hour to pack our beds and baggage, and started in our chairs through the one busy long street of the market-town. Passed many spacious temples, some with colossal carved monsters before the door, one named *Tien Shang kung* ("Palace of Heaven"), and at last emerged on the narrow stone footpath between paddy-fields, which goes by the proud title of Chêng-Tu-tu-lu, great or high road to *Chêng Tu*. Here we got out of our chairs and walked from five to six, but the walk was not refreshing, as, although the temperature was only 80°, there was no wind, and heavy mist hung round the low sandstone hills, rising 50 to 150 feet, through which the path winds, following up a small turbid chocolate-coloured stream, crossed in places by substantial stone bridges of many arches, flat slabs on heavy square uprights. The dank heavy odour of the paddy, now in ear, made us glad to resume our chairs as soon as the sun began to pierce through the mist. We met many strings of struggling coolies, by whom, and by pack animals, all the cargo traffic is carried on, some with sore shoulders, most with bent spines, through beginning their work as beasts of burden at a too early age. Large numbers were carrying coal, mines of which exist in all the "cross ranges," which appear to have tilted up the level *strata* of this Szechuan basin and rendered the mineral accessible to the primitive methods of Chinese miners. One string of mules and ponies carrying heavy packs of rice and produce met us in a place where we could not pass them. A wordy fight ensued with our cavalcade, emphasised by flourishes of bamboo poles, until ultimately the packmen, who were in the minority, had to give way and retreat to a point where they could shunt their ponies in an adjoining field of maize. We stopped at 8 A.M. for a hurried breakfast, the materials for which we carried with us, paying 18 cents for the use of the inn's best room in which to lay our table. After this we ascended to the pass over the "cross range" (N.N.E. and S.S.W.). Looking back from half-way up the view was not unlike that over the Weald of Kent. The pass was just 1000 feet above

the plateau. We got out to walk the last 300 feet and save our perspiring coolies, but regretted having done so, as we found the sun so hot that we were glad to resort to the application to our heads of towels dipped in the cool spring-water at the summit, where we rested an hour before descending the steep west slope to *Fêng Yi*, where we took tiffin.

We continued to descend until we reached the lively market-town of Wa Fong Chiao, 900 feet below the pass, the wooden bridge from which it is named being lined on both sides with roomy shops. We passed another bridge supported on backs of stone dragons resting on its piers. At the inn had a very close room, with the door into a drain-infected court-yard, its only opening. Thermometer 86°. Passed a bad night, kept awake by stench, heat, and insects.

*July* 9, 1892.—Set out at 5 A.M., walked awhile on the stone path between the dank-smelling paddy-fields, relieved occasionally on the higher ground by the graceful, tall millet, crowned with its feathery tufts of now rapidly ripening fruit. One-fourth of the land is devoted to this alcoholic grain. At 7.30 arrived at village of Ta Chang, where we breakfasted off native sponge cake and Puerh tea. It was amusing as we sat in the covered way, with crowds of coolies taking their morning rice and fixings, to watch the ceaseless traffic through what seemed to be the centre of the *cha shih—café restaurant*—many boys among them—one not over ten—carrying his load of two baskets of coal. Passed Siao Ma Fang, where were exposed on pikes the heads of two robbers who, last year, stole five donkeys laden with treasure; then ascended a platform of sandstone with scarped sides, 450 feet high, comparatively level on the top and covered with paddy-fields. A five-miles walk across this brought us to its western brink, were we enjoyed an extensive view over the valley below to the "cross range" beyond, and in the middle distance the walls of Yung Chuan Hsien could just be distinguished climbing a low hill, and with its many trees, and no buildings, visible from our point of view—the branch of a banyan tree—looking like a nobleman's

walled-in park at home. From this point, 650 feet above the plain, the path falls rapidly to 230 feet, and, traversing a narrow valley for four miles, we passed through the gates and entered the walls of Yung Chuan Hsien ("City of Eternal Streams"). The suburb was squalid and thinly populated, but in the heart of the city we found some good business streets thronged with people. Here at eleven we stopped to "noon," starting again at two. (Row in inn over thief caught stealing A's Japanese leather-cushion and her bath-towel from her chair.) Although very hot—90° in inn room—we preferred our chance outside, and after rising 350 feet (500 feet above Chungking) we "rested to cool" in the little village of Pi Pa Wo'ehr ("Guitar Nest") and stayed there over an hour, our coolies being almost dead beat. Resumed our chairs at 4 P.M., when it clouded over and a light breeze came up the valley. Seeing a nice pool of chocolate-coloured water below a really fine waterfall—160 feet wide and 20 feet deep, but of muddy water, I stopped and had an enjoyable swim, then on in chair, river flowing in a gorge it has cut out for itself almost 70 feet deep. Crossing the river on another shop-lined roofed-in bridge, we ascended to the cooler air (86°) of Hoang-Ko-Shu ("banyan tree") 430 feet, arriving at 6.45; dined at 7.30, off delicious black-boned spatchcock, with stewed plums and rice, washed down with *lao chiu* (the "vin du pays," a sort of sherry-flavoured beer fermented from the glutinous rice).

Uncomfortably hot to-day, and we felt somewhat discouraged at ten more such days in prospect; but the coolies tell me that henceforth our road lies on higher ground, and this cool place where I write seems an earnest of it.

*July* 10, 1892.—Up at four, after cool, refreshing sleep; heavy rain, and thermometer fallen to 76°; almost chilly. Curious that Chinese, in this country of easily worked sandstone do not use it in their buildings, except incidentally; probably its porosity renders it unsuitable in this humid climate; but here, at a halting-place consisting of a heavy-thatched roof thrown across the road, with wide open restaurant on either

side, we find the pillars made of squared posts of red sandstone, into which the framework of wood which supports the roof is mortised. Stone is used for the numerous extremely elaborate and really beautiful *paifang* which adorn the roads in this province, where chaste widows and centenarians are so abundantly commemorated that one wonders who pays for all, and we see new ones still being erected. These, though of stone, are an exact counterpart of a wooden archway, and the stone pillars and beams are all mortised, the extremities carved, as are their wooden prototypes, and the panels with illustrative scenes in bas-relief let into the interspaces, the three storeys comprised in the arch being roofed by stonework cut to imitate the tiles which would be used to cover a similar erection in wood. Of the three archways the centre one spans the road, the two side ones usually extending into the adjoining fields. One sees solid stone walls surrounding the gardens and groves in which the resident gentry and well-to-do farmers have their homes; but the inhabited buildings, where not of brick or, more frequently, of lath and plaster, have walls made of the red soil of the country hammered in in frames, which nothing but the wide projecting eaves of the tiled or thatched roof save from being washed away by the first thunderstorm. Most country-houses have their wooden framework visible, the interstices being filled in with bamboo laths plastered white; this gives them a picturesque and cheerful appearance, while the brick chimney, which the soft coal used for cooking in this province necessitates, adds to their homelike character.

Off again at 7.40; descended through picturesque, steep valleys, well wooded (mostly wood-oil and tallow trees), and in sweet fresh air, until we had to go down again to the muggy paddy-land. It was market-day, and the streets were crowded with countrymen, protected by their wide-spreading bamboo rain hats, who made way for us with customary Szechuan civility; crossed two very handsome carved stone bridges, each arch crowned by dragons and "monsters," their heads rising up as it were out of the arch to the balustrade. We continued

for the rest of the day ascending and descending the tortuous narrow valleys into which the sandstone plateau is cut up, the path going sometimes along the front of one wall, often crossing the terraced paddy-covered bottom, then half-way up the slope or cliff covered with the tall millet. The villages are delightfully embowered in groves of banyan, bamboo, and deciduous trees, but many of the hills are devoted to bare grave-mounds, and look as though covered with an eruption. No trees are allowed on these, which are thus a blot on the otherwise fair landscape, and so numerous are they as to make the proportion of good land they occupy a perceptible loss to this over-populated country. The road we found monotonous, notwithstanding its ups and downs, the highest "up" to-day being (the "Drug Store") 600 feet. Thence we descended till we reached our destination for the night—the walled city of Lungchanghien (300 feet), a poor sort of place, little better than Ichang city, though containing the inordinate number of spacious, highly decorated temples which every Szechuan place, large or small, seems to boast.

Our inn was most spacious, with *clean* paved stone floor, and was handsomely decorated. The *kuanting*, or official guest room, which we occupied, was about 12 feet by 18 feet and 20 feet high. The landlord is a Roman Catholic. Quite cool to-day, 76° in our stopping-places; walked, morning and evening, about six miles, and but for rain should have walked more. Day's journey, 90 *li* (27 miles), performed in seven hours' actual time. Met strings of coolies carrying loads of salt from Tsz' Liu Ching (self-flowing wells). Some officials and merchants staying in the inn called in the evening and we talked the usual banalities, but I found their dialect an obstacle to deeper intercourse. When returning their call there was nothing to do in the dim light but smoke opium, which they urged me join in. One had been to Singapore to sell Szechuan drugs to his compatriots there; he had spent only one month in the place; he was most effusive, and commenced by stating: "I have visited your honourable country," which he took

Singapore to be. Bed soon after nine as usual. A wet, cold day.

*July* 11.—Off at 6.30, after usual cup of tea; walked through city and suburb a mile. A. bought two pretty folding fans for 50 cash (*2d.*). To Sz Tsz' Chiao (Lion Bridge), seven lofty hemisphere arches with handsome parapet, through the massive piers of which rushed a foaming chocolate stream. Took canoes below the bridge, just large enough to hold our sedan chairs, one in each, and we sat in our chairs and paddled down —20 *li* (6 miles)—the stream, here about 100 yards wide, and, like the Severn at Bewdley, flowing in places at the foot of picturesque wooded hills, bamboos, and *hoangko* (*Ficus infectoria*), a species of banyan, over a rapid to Mung Tsz' Chiao, one of the low bridges built across a wide, comparatively shallow spot, a natural ford. This bridge was composed of thirty-six arches, the piers huge stone monoliths, united by long slabs a foot or more thick. Six or eight arches in the centre had been carried away, and on the tops of the piers, which had remained standing, narrow stages, composed of three small fir-tree trunks lashed together, had been laid. There was a continuous traffic of carrying coolies on the bridge. Through one arch higher than the rest we were just able to pass by taking off the tops of our sedans, shooting the fall of between one and two feet with great precision. We paddled up a small side stream and landed at a spot where boats were being laden with coal for Lung Chang, brought down from a mine in the hill about five miles higher up. This coal was being carried by strings both of coolies and pack oxen, the former carrying 1 cwt. and the latter 2 cwts. The oxen were the small yellow *hoang niu* of the province, 11 or 12 hands high. The sun being obscured by thick clouds and a slight drizzle falling, we were able to walk on, notwithstanding the crowded state of the narrow roadway, for the people all made way for us most politely, and it was curious to see how deftly the oxen, many unled and alone, cleared their packs of projecting eaves, sedans, and other obstacles in the narrow path.

A Chinese Farm-house among the Cross Ranges between Chungking and Kiating.

At 9.30 reached Tsao Chiu Fang (distillery) where we lunched in another really fine inn. Tsao Chiu Fang is one of the many long straggling villages of one long busy main street that occur at intervals of every two or three miles, having grown up along this highway, which unites the commercial with the political capital of the province. Just previous to reaching this place we came in view of the "cross range" (the fifth), which we had been crossing yesterday afternoon and this morning, until we reached a break through which the road passes, traversing a low pass (500 feet) on which is built the town of Hoang Niu Ya (byre). This we reached at 3 P.M., having previously traversed the crowded streets of another long market-town. Here our coolies—*ti kung* or substitutes—dumped our chairs down in the crowded highway and disappeared, leaving us the most uncomfortable cynosure of the lively market gathering, who were unpleasantly inquisitive but in no way rude. Descending to the west side of the pass, we traversed at its foot (300 feet) the market-town of Shih Jen Chiao (Fossil Bridge). This was another of those highly decorative bridges in which each pier is a colossal stone animal—here elephants, frogs, and dragons—flat huge stone slabs being, as it were, laid across their backs. Otherwise the country was rather monotonous, notwithstanding its broken levels and precipitous rocks crowned with firs. The "cross range," wherever we caught sight of it through breaks in the low hills we were traversing, looked wild and picturesque with its steep harvest-covered slopes; but our path lay through endless fields of paddy and plantations of tall millet, with, at intervals, magnificent banyans (some single trees looking like a grove in the distance) under which our coolies constantly took short rests to drink tea and smoke. Certainly half the country —all the slopes—is covered with millet, which is used exclusively for distilling the strong spirit called *samshu*, which sells by weight at the price of *1d.* to *2d.* per lb., according to quality. The nettle from which is made the fibre used in the manufacture of grass-cloth or, as the

Chinese call it, *hsia-pu* (summer-cloth), is also conspicuous hereabouts.

We must have passed through nearly 100 *paifang* (stone archways) to-day, and past memorial tablets innumerable. These latter are solid structures, with characters deeply carved on them a foot or more square, the cutting richly gilt, and are mostly in honour of incorruptible officials, to whose growth the rich air of this well-to-do province would seem to be eminently favourable. Boundary stones of similar Brobdingnagian proportions are also noticeable. One yesterday informed us that we were traversing the southern corner of the Ta Tsu magistracy, the city of that name lying 97 *li* (30 miles) to the north. It is in this district that the Roman Catholic Christians have been so bitterly persecuted these last few years, the account for which had just been settled, we heard in Chungking, through the perseverance of Father Pons, who went to Peking to plead the cause of his co-religionists in person. To-day we were notified of the termination of the western boundary of the Yung Chang district and of the eastern boundary of the Lung Chang district; but in some incomprehensible manner, and for a reason only understandable by Chinese, the former stands about 50 yards west of the latter, so that the two districts would seem to overlap. Arrived at Lung Chang, 6 P.M., 400 feet above Chungking; thermometer 80°.

*July* 12, 1892.—We left with regret the comfortable, not to say gorgeous, inn, with its many court-yards, galleries, and stage, like an old English inn—Hung Ngân Fang ("Overflowing Grace Hotel")—at Lung Chang to take the by-road to Kiating, on which we were told the inns were second-rate. But we never expected to have to camp in such a pig-sty as that in which I now write, and with the thermometer at 90°, and with three more similar nights in view, we regret we did not take the Chêng Tu route, thence by boat down to Kiating, instead of turning off, as we have done, in order to see the Salt Springs, which, if this heat continues, would have been better put off till our return.

We set off this morning quite cool—thermometer 75°—skirting the river which runs past the west wall of the city, in a mist through which the setting moon was just visible over our path, which was the usual paved way, but 2 feet 6 inches wide instead of the 5 feet highway of yesterday. Coolies were already setting out from the city with the useful but malodorous buckets (the Japanese carry these covered, the Chinese never), who, going along ahead and in rear of our chair, made it a work of time and patience to get extricated from them, which we did not entirely do until they ultimately dropped off by side paths to the surrounding farms. The sun rose clear and cloudless for the first time since leaving Chungking, and presaged a hot day. We ascended still between the eternal paddy-fields, some 200 feet, to another broken, highly cultivated, but almost treeless plateau, except where the noble *hoangko* trees and bamboo groves gave shade to the farm-houses and to the numerous rest places. Suddenly we found the path skirting a precipice, and the view of a beautiful Yosemite valley in miniature burst upon us. A waterfall at the head of the ravine, whose stream our road crossed, completed the analogy. The basin, some three or four miles across, was walled in by tree-crowned precipices, and from its floor rose low, rocky, tree-covered hills, the comparatively level bottom being a sea of paddy-fields, with snug farm-houses scattered about. We crossed our highest point to-day at 8 A.M., Pu Chia Chang (market-town of the Pu clan) 28.40 by my aneroid, which, as it was a brilliant, cloudless day, I reckon to mean a height of 650 feet above Chungking. We traversed another long, busy, crowded one-street village, called Lung Shih Chên ("Dragon Stone Mart") 500 feet, with an inordinate number of butchers' stalls, at which fresh-killed pork—never more than one, usually half a porker, on one stall—was on sale in unusual quantity. Thence on and up and down eternal staircases, and winding in and round small, highly cultivated, but monotonous valleys, their floors rice, and sides, up to the summits, tall millet, with here and there beans, sugar-cane, the China grass nettle, and hemp.

The road wound about in a most ridiculous manner, often doubling on itself in order to follow round the boundary of a paddy-field, which it might far more easily have crossed, and so narrow that the traffic was frequently jammed for space. At one spot, fourteen coolies carrying a squared sandstone post, with seven bamboos resting on their shoulders, advanced literally at a snail's pace, setting down their burden every twenty steps for a rest, all naked and streaming with perspiration. We had to wait behind them a quarter of an hour before we came to a place wide enough for our chairs to pass them. We met salt coolies continuously the whole way, and had to shout to them to wait for us to pass in a place where there was no room. We also met strings of poor porters carrying young fir trees, sawn planks, and coffin wood, and apparently fearfully overloaded; all had a worn harassed look, and often bent spines, and not spirit enough left in them to care for our strange appearance by a word or sign. At 10.30 we spread our table-cloth in a wayside restaurant, where our coolies breakfasted, and we tiffined off chicken and bread and cheese, with a treat in the shape of a drink of raspberry vinegar which we carried with us, and water in lieu of the refreshing but monotonous milkless and sugarless tea. It being very hot we stopped till 2 P.M., amusing ourselves with chess.

Went on through similar country—in which we heard no bird sing, but only the croaking of the frogs in the paddy-fields—till, at 4 P.M., we descended from the plateau into a better wooded and more cheerful but hotter country. The edge of the plateau reminded me of the rocks and trees which form the background of the mediæval paintings of the Holy Family and of Saints, and which, I believe, is a representation of the scenery near Assisi. Though picturesque, it is monotonous in this July season, when there is not a flower to relieve the ubiquitous dark green of the *hoangko*, palms, millet, and the everlasting paddy. Crossed a stream of 50 yards, falling over a natural rock-weir, in the side of which a new channel, 10 feet wide by about the same in depth, had been hewn in

the soft rock to convey water to two horizontal wheels, which turned stone rollers to grind rice by a stone wheel revolving round a circular trough let into a wooden floor above. At sunset descended in a close, steamy dell, in which was the hamlet of Niu-hu-tu (Ox-Lake Ferry), past which flows the wide To Kiang, an affluent of the Yangtze: its narrow streets seemed literally jammed with naked humanity, and a mob followed us into the inn, and was only prevented by our posse of twenty servants from invading the miserable room assigned to us.

# CHAPTER II

## THE BRINE WELLS

NON-WORKING Free Ferry—Roman Catholic Hamlet—Salt Carriers—Poling up Stream—Bamboo Grove—Numerous Chinese Family—Fall into a Paddy-field—Tsz' Liu Ching's Scaffoldings—Grass Replaces Paddy—Cities of Refuge—Strange View for China—No Inn would take us in—Usages of Chinese Restaurant—Oil Wells—Bamboo Dipper—Salt-boiling on a Large Scale—Grass for Buffaloes—Drinkable Water—Storage Vats, Aqueducts, and Wooden Towers—Chain Pumps worked by Coolies—Intelligence of Working People—Democratic Government—Hoping to Reach Salt in Three Years.

*Wednesday, July* 15, 1892. — At daylight, 78°, we were carried in our chairs half a mile through narrow, winding streets, when, after the close, filthy air of the inn and the crowded town, we emerged on to the bank of a fine, fast-flowing river, about 400 yards wide, with picturesque red sandstone cliffs facing us, crowned with dark green trees, giving us a reminder of the Avon at Bristol. Carried along over the dirt and rubbish heaps and past the rows of ruinous shanties that squeeze themselves between the boundary proper of every river-side town in China and its river—and through which none but Chinese chair-bearers would ever have found it possible to edge their way—we were at length deposited, still sitting in our sedans, on the floor of a roomy flat-bottomed ferry-boat, and, after pulling up in shore half a mile we quickly shot across the stream, and were landed at the foot of the steps of the western side of the "Ox-Lake Ferry." This is properly a free ferry, as is shown by the elegant temple built at the head

of the steps and under the cliff, and by the inscription in four large bright gold characters over the entrance, "Free Ferry Public Hall." We asked where is the free ferry, and why have we been mulcted in 400 cash? Some men in the crowd replied: "It doesn't work," and pointed to some small, dilapidated water-logged boats tied up under the bank. I could get at no reason, but our own men told me it was owing to the opposition of the boatmen. As these free ferries, which are numerous in China, have all more or less rice land bequeathed to them by their benevolent founders, it would have been interesting to learn the "true inwardness" of this non-functioning ferry had time permitted, which it unfortunately didn't. In a picturesque break in the ruby wall, and about half a mile higher up, where the river sweeps round in a bold curve at the foot of the cliffs it has made for its framing, what appeared to be a neat cluster of Szechuan farm-houses was pointed out to us by one of our chair-bearers, himself a Roman Catholic, as a Tien Chu Tang, or "Hall of the Lord of Heaven." Numbers of these quiet Christian hamlets, unobtrusive except in their conspicuous cleanliness, are scattered throughout this province of Szechuan, many under a native priest, only visited at times by a European *confrère*. As at every spot where the European has put down his foot in this land, the eye and the nose rejoice in meeting with these cases in the general ocean of filth and decay, and the traveller always regrets it if time prevents his visiting them and giving a temporary respite to his injured senses.

Our path entered a ravine, following up a small stream, and almost the first regular valley we had yet threaded, the bulk of the country consisting of irregular ravines and hollows of all shapes and sizes bordered by more or less precipitous hills, rising about 150 feet above them—the hollows completely filled by terraced paddy-fields, the heights covered by the equally tiresome *kaoliang*, not a square foot of uncultivated ground anywhere, unless the fine bamboo copses surrounding the farm-houses may be so termed, and the spots where the magnificent

*hoangko* trees shade wayside shrines and frequent resting-places. After ascending this valley about two miles in a north-westerly direction, we turned off south-west, and crossed another of the many low passes, this one 150 feet by the aneroid, approached on either side by steep stone staircases. We met long trains of salt- and some sugar-carriers, men carrying 140 lbs. and miserable boys of ten years carrying 50 lbs. weight; the cause, probably, of the spinal curvature that afflicts no small proportion of these hardly-used beasts of burden. At nine we reached the busy market-town of Shin-tienpu (New Shop), having come 30 *li* (9 miles), where we breakfasted in a large, dirty wayside restaurant, all open to the street as usual, and our breakfast-table, with its white table-cloth and knives and forks, the centre of an admiring crowd of half-naked men and boys and women. Our remnant of bread had turned mouldy and had to be thrown away, but we had some biscuits left, thus letting ourselves down to rice diet by slow degrees. At noon reached the banks of the Brine Wells river at a spot called Hsien T'an, or "Dangerous Rapid"; we here took boat. The river comes down from Tsz' Liu Ching (Self-flowing Wells), but it appears to be cheaper to send the salt by road on coolies' backs and load the boats here than to ship it by water direct, although we saw an equal number of small flat-bottomed junks at both places. However, by loading here the Hsien T'an is avoided, although it certainly was not a very formidable obstacle to-day. Below it a fleet of junks were loading salt for down river, and above it was moored a row of the small travelling boats, with the capacious lofty arched mat awnings that distinguish the floating vehicles of this wind-less and comfort-loving province. Into two of these we now stowed ourselves, our chairs, our retinue of twenty persons, and our belongings generally, and gave our tired bearers a well-earned respite from the hot sun while we were poled 20 *li* (6 miles) up stream against a sluggish, almost imperceptible, current, through low steep hills entirely covered with the ubiquitous maize and millet, relieved by a few groves

of magnificent bamboos, the stream about 100 yards wide and of the usual chocolate colour. In an hour and a half we reached Mu Tze To (Wood Reach) and betook ourselves again to the endless stone staircase. The heat was very oppressive as we were carried along the bottom of a narrow valley through close-smelling paddy-fields; so much so that we ordered our men, nothing loath, to carry us across to a bamboo grove on the opposite slope, where we might at least be protected for a while from the vertical rays of the noonday sun. The thermometer in my closed chair was 95°, and the air was charged with the fetid, though invisible, vapours from the stagnant water of the paddy-fields. These we traversed, and ascended the heights on the opposite side of the valley until we reached a magnificent grove of large bamboo clusters, covering some three or four acres, under which we and the tired bearers of our three sedans reclined. It seems to be always cool in the hottest weather under bamboos, and here, at last, a slight air was stirring, which was most grateful. A small stream which went to irrigate the paddy-fields flowed at our feet, and in this we dipped towels to wrap round our heads, and thoroughly enjoyed the cool shade, although at the risk of arriving at our destination (the Brine Wells) after sunset.

But we were not left long to enjoy our peaceful rest undisturbed. No apparently quiet spot in China that I have ever visited is free from Chinese. Even in forests on the mountains there are wood-cutters, grass-cutters, and charcoal-burners, and let one espy the strange barbarian and he becomes the *avant-garde* of a crowd which swarms in from every point of the compass. In China it is truly a case of stamping the foot and armies arising out of the ground; so here, we had not been five minutes alone ere we were completely surrounded by a wondering crowd of men, women, and children. They all came from a farm-house, or rather from a cluster of houses situated on the farther edge of the grove. I counted 150 heads. These were all one family, and rejoiced in the common name of Wang. Though troublesome they

a path some 50 feet above the water until it apparently comes to an end at a rocky point round which the river doubles back out of sight; suddenly we see our chairs, which we are following, enter the wide doorway of a large Buddhist temple which crowns this, as almost every other prominent point in devout Szechuan. We must leave the quiet country valley, traverse the wide central court-yard, and emerge through the opposite doorway on to a wide-paved terrace overlooking a busy city romantically situated on the two banks of a rocky river, united by a many-arched bridge, some of whose piers are natural rock masses. Fleets of junks, with their single masts and tall matsheds, filled quiet bays among the rocks, while rows of silent factories, busily engaged in producing the cargoes of salt, for which they were waiting, held aloft their smoke-free towers and, unlike anything Chinese, produced the effect of a manufacturing city of Europe or America. The short twilight was rapidly waning into starlit darkness and the many lamps on the heights and along the river banks completed the picture, could we have made one to do it justice. As Chinese municipalities provide no lights to show the way amidst the muck-heaps and broken paving, every pedestrian after sunset carries in his right hand a big decorated paper lantern at the end of a stick to light his path before him; hence a most picturesque effect is produced, especially on the crowded, unrailed bridge.

We now re-enter our chairs, hoping in a few minutes to be carried into the court-yard of a shelter-giving, if unclean inn, with our supper-table set out, as usual, awaiting us. Our "boy," *Kwanse* (Manager), as the natives designate him, had gone on some time before in company with the *tsai jen*, or "official messenger," who conveys (at our expense, but not by our request, be it noted) the barbarian traveller from one city to another, and whose duty it is to see the passported stranger safe out of one magisterial district and duly handed over to the responsibility of the officer of the next district. By these everything had been arranged in advance each day

hitherto, so we had perfect confidence. Our coolies carried us down the wide staircase leading from the temple terrace into the crowded "water" street, or Shing Lung Kai (Flourishing Street), by which name the town on this, the left bank of the river, is known. To our surprise, we passed on through Shing Lung Kai and crossed the bridge connecting it with the opposite town, called Chang Chia T'o (Pool or Anchorage of the Chang Hamlet—lit. "family"), and were carried along a stone bund—river on our right, shops on our left, and crowds of half-naked, noisy humans everywhere. Here we were set down, our chair-bearers explaining that no one had come to give them the name of the inn as usual. After waiting thus patiently half an hour in the dark, surrounded by the usual inquisitive crowd, while our bearers had gone off for refreshment, we were taken up again and once more deposited in the middle of a dirty, crowded, noisome smelling street, attracting a still greater crowd, who became quite excited on discovering that a *Yangpotsz* (foreign woman) was on show in one of the chairs and could be scrutinised by a lantern held up to her face. It was now 9 o'clock, and tired of waiting longer in this ignominious position, I got out and insisted on finding quarters in one of the inns near, there being several in our immediate neighbourhood. At length we found plenty of room for ourselves, our chairs, and our train of twenty natives, including porters, in the Yung Hua Kuan Tsan, or "Perpetually-flowering Official Hotel." Like all the houses on this side of the street, the Yung Hua was built with its back to the rock, and so we ascended by a flight of steep rock steps to the *kuanting*, or officers' pavilion, which is invariably situated at the rear and next the *cabinets d'aisance*, which hereabouts are simple basins hewn out of the rock, open to all. In our position of distinguished guests we always occupied the *kuanting* with its adjacent amenities, and were never sorry to rise by candle-light and effect our retreat as soon as we could see our way but here, though sheer hunger compelled us to eat a hasty meal there, sleeping in the *kuanting* was out of the question.

The walls were black and the floor encrusted with several inches of mud, upon which it was impossible to adjust the table upright; there was a floor above which was inhabited, and we had to send up and request its occupants to keep quiet while we were eating, as every movement they made sent down a shower of black dirt upon our food. Chinese, we found, invariably yield to such requests with good grace. Nothing surprised us more on this trip than the way in which the Chinese—probably unable to sleep for the mosquitoes and worse vermin—spend these hot summer nights talking, smoking opium and amusing themselves till midnight, and then resume their journey at daylight; they eke out their sleep with a short siesta during the noonday halt. The noise up till midnight is something inconceivable. The front part of the inn is a restaurant, and here the waiters shout out the name of each dish as ordered, intoning, as on the Chinese stage, the cook and *changkweitih* (accountant) being thus both simultaneously advised. Then, when the eating and tea- and wine-drinking are over, and the kitchen fire is out, comes the distribution of beds—wadded quilts, which are preserved neatly folded up on the shelves which occupy two sides of the accountant's room, the other two sides being open, one to the street, one to the restaurant, screened off only by a high counter. Each guest goes up, pays 24 cash (1*d.*), and has a quilt given him which he spreads on the permanent straw mattress, rolling himself up in it in the cool of the morning. Each man has to give his name and occupation, &c., which the innkeeper is bound by law to keep an accurate record of; this is called *kuahao*, or "posting the name," and for this a fee of 6 cash (¼*d.*) from coolies, and 12 cash (½*d.*) from travellers of a superior class is exacted. We two, for the use of the *kwantung* (hot water), and rice *à discretion* usually paid 700 or 800 cash (2*s.* 4*d.* to 2*s.* 8*d.*). Our boy paid 120 cash, including his evening meal (value 70 cash), say, 5*d.* in all, and our coolies about 3*d.* each. In this hall, "everlasting brilliant," we waited patiently until business subsided,

Family Group in the House of a Chinese Official.

and then had our chairs (as it was impossible to spread our beds in such a place) put close to the street front, as far distant from the officers' pavilion as possible, and in these we slept a few hours. By taking down two of the doors and laying them across the threshold, upon which we placed two of our coolies to sleep as guards—the innkeeper, afraid of thieves, insisted on this precaution—we managed to secure both privacy and a breath of fresh air, and to solace ourselves with a glimpse of the stars in the narrow slit of sky visible between the nearly meeting eaves of our own and the houses opposite. Made 95 *li* (28½ miles)—a long day!

*July* 14, 1892.—At daylight, while our frugal breakfast was preparing, went for a stroll, although worn out by our long journey of the day before, followed by an almost sleepless night, our "boy," who had proudly installed himself in our rejected best room, now wore a rueful face as he exhibited his arms swollen with bug bites, and declared he had not slept a wink. The Szechuan people, though obtrusively inquisitive, like most Chinese, are respectful to everybody attended by a sedan chair, which is a necessary voucher of respectability for a "Western" (a term which includes Americans more certainly than does the word "European") in these parts. Especially is this voucher needed by the "Western" travelling in European clothes, as we are doing, the tight fit and uncouth cut of which announce to Chinese eyes a lamentable poverty which had had to make shift with scanty material and homely workmanship.* Both banks of the river here are lined with the towers of oil wells as well as the heights above. We walked into one establishment not a hundred yards from our inn and found the pump, or, to speak more accurately, the bamboo dipper not working. The well, which is about five inches in diameter, and capped with a stone ring, was plugged with wood, out of which proceeded a small bamboo tube which carried the gas to the

* Richthofen says the people here have the reputation of being very rude. He unwisely travelled without a sedan. We found the phrase "fang-er" (give way) always effectual.

kitchen in the rear. The approach to these back premises was again up steps cut in the solid rock. We found the early rice cooking in the usual wide iron boiler (*kwo*), underneath which a gas-jet was burning with a bluish flame, the mouthpiece or burner being simply a handful of clay roughly daubed around the extremity of the bamboo tube. The brine at this well only suffices for about three hours "pumping" in the twenty-four hours.

A small affluent here falls into the river (right bank), crossed near its mouth by a handsome stone bridge, over which the "western road," upon which we continue our journey, passes. On either side of the ravine are more fire-wells, the towers standing up from among clusters of houses interspersed with bamboo groves and trees. We set up our camera on a flat-topped rock, and took a general view of the ravine, keeping off the crowd from getting in front of the field with no little difficulty, and then we turned into one of the larger establishments on our left, surrounded by a lofty stone wall, shut the doors on the crowd, and posted two of our coolies on guard; I then asked for the Chang-kwei-tih, or manager, who seemed overcome with the sudden irruption into his domain of a foreign man and woman and an uncanny machine on three legs. This instrument, for ought he could tell, might have come to rob the place of its *pao-pei* (treasures), to effect which barbarians, it is well known, are provided with special machines, and so he gave but a reluctant consent to our visit. The bamboo dipper, or pump, a tube of bamboo about thirty feet long and three inches in diameter, was just coming to the surface as we approached the well; when the bottom of the tube is raised clear above the surface, the attendant forces up the valve with a heavy, hook-shaped piece of iron, and the brine gushes out into a wooden tub, in the bottom of which is inserted a bamboo tube, which conveys the brine to the evaporating vats situated on a lower level. This tube held about 300 lbs. weight of brine, and occupied a quarter of an hour in raising. The line is formed of strips of split bamboo, about half an inch wide, pieced

together by bamboo lashings, and is renewed every ten days. The rope is carried over the pulley at the top of the tower and led past another pulley on the ground to a covered shed, in which is a rough wooden apparatus, like a spinning-wheel placed horizontally, with eight or more arms, each about 10 feet radius. Three buffaloes were hitched to this huge wheel, each attended by a driver, who follows them round the fifty turns required to raise the dipper with its brine, the depth of this well being about 3000 English feet.

After taking a couple of photos here we went down to our "chairs," which were waiting on the bridge, and had some difficulty in getting our coolies to start after their broken night's rest, but promising them a short day of 45 *li* (13½ miles) we at last persuaded them to move. It was now past eight and the sun was powerful, so we let ourselves be carried up the ravine to a large boiling establishment to which we had been recommended. Here, in a long shed, were two rows, each of twenty-four pans of boiling brine, each pan heated by a single gas jet in the same way as in the small establishment we had visited at dawn. The manager, who was very polite in showing us everything, informed me that each pan produced 100 catties of salt daily, thus making the daily output at this one place three tons. When first boiled the salt is taken out as a hard black cake; it is then dissolved again and washed with clean water, re-crystallised, and eventually marketed in square bamboo mat-bags in the shape of coarse white crystals, each of these bags weighing about 60 lbs. A row of gaslights dependent from the roof illuminated the shed, which had the dirty untidy appearance of all Chinese habitations, the floor being a succession of hillocks which no attempt was made to level until they render the ways absolutely impassable. The sulphurous odours, combined with those of the cesspools and numerous workmen, made us glad to get out again into the hot sunshine. From here we ascended to the summit of the limestone plateau by a staircase 10 feet wide, the finest road we had yet traversed, which has been built to accommodate the heavy traffic of

the coolies and pack animals which goes on between the two salt centres of Shih Nung Kai and Kung Ching, a distance of three miles. The Tsz Liu Ching (self-flowing wells) salt country is about 9 miles across, there being some twenty-four fire-wells and several hundred brine wells in this area. The country is all grass, a coarse description which suits the water-buffalo. We met many women (small-footed) and boys carrying loads of grass, some from places 50 *li* (15 miles) distant, as also leaves, mostly of the bean, for the pigs, and there seems, judging from the number of carcasses hanging on the butchers' stalls which lined the streets of the crowded villages we passed through, a heavy consumption of pork by the workmen employed in this industry. From the top of the ridge, which we found to be 500 feet above the river, we beheld the busy town of Kung Ching, covering the slope of another limestone ridge which lay in our path, and which was separated from us by a steep ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a rapid stream, tumbling over loose boulders and crossed by a wide three-arched bridge.

The day being very oppressive we remained in our chairs, and were carried down the stone path between the dingy grass knolls and up through the town on the other side. Seeing a cool spring we ventured to stop and take a drink of cold water, the want of which we had felt to be one of our greatest deprivations on the journey thus far, the eternal hot water, called tea —which was instantly supplied wherever we stopped—though, doubtless, more wholesome and well adapted to the climate, being very insipid. The streets of Kung Ching were extraordinarily narrow, steep and angular, and none but Chinese chair coolies would ever have carried us through them. At many turns the chairs were only got round the corners with the greatest difficulty. The whole of the hills and valleys thus traversed are covered with the rough wooden towers of the brine wells, 50 to 100 feet in height, the more lofty ones being stayed from their summits by ropes of bamboo. These, and the innumerable brine and gas ducts, give the country the

appearance of being covered in places with colossal spider-webs. There is a vast interchange of brine and gas going on according to the wants of the various factories, and to meet this every kind of rough appliance known to the Chinese is employed. Storage vats of brine and gas are set down anywhere most convenient, in the middle of a field or in the already too-crowded streets of a town, while the communicating conduits pass across the fields or along the streets, still farther blocking these up with their trestles, like elevated railways in New York on a small scale. Iron is scarce and dear while bamboo is cheap, and scarcely any of the former material is in use except for the crowbars or drivers with which new wells are being bored, and for nails; even these latter are replaced by bamboo lashing wherever practicable.

In order to convey the brine across the ridge that intervenes between the two depôts of Kung Ching and Shih Nung Kai an incredible amount of manual labour is employed, such hard drudgery as none but Chinese could endure. In addition to the innumerable brine towers, we noticed a series of more substantial erections, the use of which we could not at first determine; there were also square towers, squat-shaped and roofed in with substantial thatch and wide eaves. A nearer examination proved them to be the receptacles of chain pumps, being worked treadmill-fashion by two, three, or four naked coolies perched under the roof, fanning themselves with one hand while they steadied themselves, leaning against a horizontal bar, with the other, their naked feet working the toilsome but clever machinery by which the Chinese ages ago solved the problem of making water run up hill. At the foot of each tower was a reservoir cut in the rock, which was supplied with brine by a bamboo conduit led from the summit of a similar pumping-tower below. The slope of the hill here was a gentle one, and the towers, each one of which raised brine about 12 feet, stood about 50 yards apart; having once reached the top of the hill the brine descends the other side by gravity.

And all this hard labour of man and kine is repaid by a manufactured article which is delivered in its finished state for 15 cash a catty, ½d. per lb. Truly, when the Chinese do introduce Western knowledge and machinery into their arts, the control of the industrial world will be in their hands.

They occupy a country as vast, as fertile, and as prolific in resources as the United States of America, while they are undoubtedly the hardest and most patient workers on the earth, and consume in a month for all their wants little more than an English or American artisan spends in a single day. Nor are they devoid of intelligence; all these poor coolies gave sensible answers to any questions we put to them, and were thoroughly well informed in their own sphere. The shipyards of Hong-kong and Shanghai show of what excellent work Chinese are capable under European guidance, and it will not be long before the conservative upper class sees the need of Western learning and will allow the country to profit by it. To-day, however, every traveller is struck by the superiority in energy and intelligence which the lower and middle classes display when compared with their ignorant and conceited superiors, the gentry so-called, who are the real enemies of that progress and prosperity which would raise China to a front rank among the nations of the earth. The nineteenth century has seen our own "Tory," once synonymous with the "stupid" party, converted to the doctrine of progress: may we not unnaturally look for a like metamorphosis in the coming twentieth century here in China? No caste traditions hamper the people as in India; they have the distinguished merit of being free from the religious prejudices that so long arrested progress in Europe, and they have enjoyed for centuries the most practically democratic government that, up to the date of the French revolution, the world had ever seen. My suggestion to the managers of the works we went over, that they should use the gas to drive a steam-engine, was made a decade too soon; not that they did not appear thoroughly to appreciate its advantages, judging by their intelligent inquiries as to the cost, efficiency, &c., but,

with the Chinaman's timid nature, they feared being involved in indirect difficulties, the chief of which they indicated, but never clearly expressed, as being the opposition of the *shên-shih* (lit. the sash-wearers), or "gentry."

On the summit above Kung Ching we made an unceremonious entry into a walled-in establishment, where a new well was in process of boring. We asked for the *Chang kwei tih*, who asked us to sit down politely enough, but, upon my beginning to ply him with questions, he fled into another room. We sat down opposite the dipper, which, upon being hauled to the surface, discharged two bucketsful of liquid red mud, the result of the previous hammering of the red sandstone rock by the 200 lb. heavy crowbar which was lying alongside. This boring was now only some 300 feet deep; the workmen told me they hoped to reach the brine in three years, but many borings have taken ten times that period before the pactolean fount was successfully tapped.

# CHAPTER III

## FROM TSZ' LUI CHING TO KIATING FU

IMPOVERISHED Salt Wells—Raging Cholera—The great system of Sweating—Restaurant with High-road through it—"CrossRanges"—Bare Utilitarianism—New Triumphal Arch—A Rainless District—Goddess of Mercy Precipice—Colossal Buddha's Head—Self-acting Irrigating Wheels—Subtle Pills—Opium Smoking—Wind-less Szechuan—Buddhist Shade Trees—Military Commander of District—Horrors of Chinese Inns—Mountain Fortifications—Fi-kung again—No Stone used—Religious Feeling—*O Mi To Fo*—Chinese Main Road—Handsome Bridges—Mantze Caves—At last the River Min.

AFTER leaving the self-flowing wells our road took us again through broken (one cannot call it undulating) country, highly cultivated with paddy and beans in the valleys, and maize and millet on the slopes. We passed several petty salt works, having an impoverished appearance, being probably on the extreme western edge of the subterranean brine basin of Tsz' Liu Ching, and comparatively unproductive. The towers were not over 30 feet, and the winding drums 12 feet instead of the usual size of 20 feet or 25 feet in diameter. None were working, though at one place we saw two pans full of brine being evaporated over a very smoky chimneyless coal fire. Probably these wells only flow an hour or two each day: we made inquiries, but had not time or inclination for the prolonged cross-examination needful in China before the traveller may venture to record anything in his note-book as an actual fact. The heat was most oppressive; the close, misty, yet sunny wind-less heat of Szechuan; we were all

tired out by our miserable night at Changchiat'o, and anxious to get on to a resting-place. Indeed, but for the apparent impossibility of obtaining an anyway decent shelter to sleep in, we should certainly have spent another night at this, so far the most interesting spot in China we had yet visited, and investigated it more thoroughly. Another reason for not prolonging our stay was the fact that a bad epidemic of cholera was raging, indeed throughout all Szechuan, but with especial virulence in this crowded district. The wonder, indeed, is that with such surroundings and with the hot, still, damp air any of the population are found to survive the summer. We rested for luncheon in a tumble-down but roomy restaurant situated at the top of one of the ridges and, *inter alia*, ate a kind of rice *blanc-mange*, called Liangkao (cold pudding), of rice flour, which we found to be as refreshing as it is said to be wholesome. This and bean curd are additions to their four regular rice meals which the hardworking coolies much indulge in, and ours certainly keep in capital condition.

It is true that ours do not carry us half the distance. They sublet their work to that omnipresent and convenient being in China—and especially in foreign households—the *ti-kung*, or substitute. Our contract to convey us the 300 miles from Chungking to Omi Shan was 4800 cash per man (fifteen shillings sterling). We had eight coolies for our two chairs, three for our boy's chair, and six porters for our bedding, photographic apparatus, plates, and foreign luxuries—seventeen in all. "Sweating" is developed to a high point in China. Thus of the 4800 cash we have to pay the "hong" for each coolie, only 3820 goes to that ill-used individual. It is true the hong "secures" them and the safety of our numerous possessions, and for this purpose sends along with the coolies a "*fu t'ou*," or headman—a most useful and necessary individual we found him to be, and not above taking a hand (or rather shoulder) at a chair or load when one or other of our coolies knocked up and had no substitute to hand. For our coolies sublet their work again to local porters who are paid from

1½ to 4 cash per *li*, according to the demand and season of the year (planting, harvest, &c.) This makes about ¼*d.* to ½*d.* per mile English. A full day's journey is 90 *li* (27 miles), and a short day's 60 *li* (18 miles). To-day, owing to the bad night's rest and delay at Tzs' Liu Ching, we stopped after covering half a "*t'san*" (stage), only 14 miles, and put up for the night at a very dirty but airy inn in the long busy street called Chên Chia Chang, market-town of the Chên family. Here the thunder-storm, which seems to terminate each hot spell of four or five days in Szechuan, cooled the air and gave us an excellent night's rest.

*July* 15, 1892.—At dawn started on foot through the long street of the village; few people up; passed spacious temples with colossal carved stone monsters guarding the central entrance under the stage, which usually occupies here the northern side of the big court-yard forming the pit, free to all when theatrical representations are given. Walked on 15 *li* to Chin Li Kang, where we arrived at 7 A.M., and breakfasted together with our coolies in one of the usual extensive wayside restaurants, through the middle of which the covered-in road-way passes, offering shelter from rain and sun, and tempting the tired coolie to pause at one of the many tables and refresh himself for a few cash with rice congee, vermicelli soup, bean curd, tea and wine. We paid one cash for our square of rice-flour *blanc-mange* yesterday, including molasses sauce: 1 copper cash = $\frac{1}{17}$ penny sterling. The morning, which had been cool and misty, was rapidly growing warm as we ascended a sandstone ridge, which the aneroid showed to be 500 feet above the altitude of our last night's resting-place (which I made 600 feet above Chungking, or about 1600 feet above the sea). The country, now we had left the interposing limestone plateau (or "cross range," as Blakiston has well named these successive limestone hills that traverse the great "red basin" of Szechuan, almost always in a N.N.E. and S.S.W. direction), resumed its former aspect of small terraced valleys, bordered by steep heights, often precipitous, the crops still paddy, beans,

maize, and tall millet (this latter entirely shutting out the view when our path led through it), of all of which we were getting heartily tired. For, in the agricultural districts of China, no parks are met with, no flower-gardens surround the low farm-houses. The poor crippled housewives have little inclination, even if they had the leisure, to make their homes neat and pleasing. Bare utilitarianism reigns supreme, and we can see here the result that a general adoption of the allotment system, coupled with pressure of population, may be expected to produce in England.

At the top of the rise, *ling*, or "pass," as the Chinese term these summits crossed by the roadway, we found a grand new *paifang*, or triumphal arch, in course of erection. It was a comparatively lonely part of the road, but two new large houses stood on its left hand; one turned out to be the office of works and temporary residence of the decorators employed on the arch, and the other a new *cha-shih* (*café restaurant*, or lit. tea and eating-house), and consequently clean, but kept by an extraordinarily dirty old woman. We enjoyed here our mid-day meal and rest, relays of our coolies fanning us the while. A new triumphal arch was something novel: this one was as large and as handsome as any I had ever seen, and the stone carvings were being richly coloured and profusely gilded. Its erection had been authorised by Imperial edict, a facsimile of which, in Chinese and Manchu, had been cut into one of the stone panels of the arch, the ground being gold and the letters blue, in honour of one Liu, who had contributed largely to the Yellow River fund at the time of the great inundation in the last decade. The arch had cost Tls. 8000 (£1600), which, taking the relative value of money and price of skilled labour in the two countries, makes it equal to a work costing £8000 in Europe. Nothing of the kind more elegant and elaborate can be conceived. Its site was admirable, commanding a view over a wide extent of rich, broken, and well-wooded country as far as the eye can reach. We learnt the curious fact that in this immediate neighbourhood they were badly off for water

no rain having fallen for a month, while all around the country is regularly watered by frequent thunderstorms and drenching showers. It was the only comparatively barren spot we had met with since entering the province 500 miles to the east. Curiously, there are other such inexplicable spots. A traveller mentions a place in Siberia, about 1000 miles to the north of this place, where, over a diameter of 30 miles or so, no snow falls, although deep snow lies all round—and, in consequence, the sleighs in winter have to be painfully dragged over the bare gravel, a day or two's journey.

We passed another remarkable sandstone cliff standing up vertically 150 to 200 feet, called Kuan Yin Ngai, or "Goddess of Mercy" (the Buddhist analogue of the Virgin Mary) precipice, its crest crowned with the substantial walls of the Tien Pao Chai ("Citadel of Heaven's Precious Ones"). Roofs of houses and fine trees could be distinguished behind its walls, so it appears to be inhabited. The country generally was almost identical in outline and productiveness with that immediately west of Chungking, traversed in the early part of our journey. We were approaching the walls of Jung Hsien, the "Glorious City," when, on our left, we noticed a colossal head and shoulders of Buddha, cut off the side of a cliff about a mile off, which appeared to be over 300 feet in height. On the edge of the level-topped cliff, immediately over the head, a large temple building was just discernible, and not so large but that the colossus could have made an easy meal of it. The figure appeared to have been recently regilded, and shone gloriously in the western sun. Traversing in our chairs Jung Hsien, a not very important-looking city, though containing some good shops, we issued out of the west gate on to a fast-running stream about 50 yards wide, on the banks of which the self-acting irrigating wheels, common to this part of Szechuan, were at work. They are entirely made of bamboo and about 20 feet in diameter, and the circumference, in addition to the floats by which the stream causes the wheel to revolve, is covered with short dippers of hollow bamboo,

Chinese Agriculture—Fields of Opium Poppies in Flower.

tied diagonally across it, so that upon reaching the summit in their revolution they discharge their contents into a trough, whence the water is conveyed to the paddy-fields on the bank above.

A conspicuous feature, never absent from the main streets of the cities we traversed, was the number of banners stretched across the roadway in the business quarter, red with white balls, in each Chinese character, the whole legend being *Kai yen ling tan*, meaning "Subtle Pills for Stopping Smoke." The same are displayed in Chungking and all the towns in Szechuan; these pills are quack medicine, both native and foreign, the latter containing opium and engendering by their use a worse habit than the original one of smoking the drug. They are mostly sold by herb doctors at street stalls, and are a considerable source of profit to these, and still more so to the foreign importer, who, taking advantage of the liberal Customs' tariff which admits foreign medicines free, thus introduces into the country by a side-wind that heavily taxed and, to the Chinese, most pernicious drug, free of duty. Opium-smoking is so widespread in Western China, where the poppy grows most luxuriantly everywhere as a winter crop (succeeded invariably by a summer crop of maize, millet, or beans), and is as yet untaxed by the authorities, that it is estimated half the adult male population smoke, besides a considerable proportion of the women. The farmers, too, have every inducement to grow it, as they pay rent to their landlords only on the summer crop (usually one-third), while of the opium, the most profitable of all, they retain the whole proceeds in their own hands. Wherever I stop and enter into conversation, I am invariably asked two questions: (1) "Are you selling books?" suggested by the remembrance of the Bible colporteurs, who seem to have been ubiquitous. (2) "Have you any cure for opium?" When I answer, "No," and that foreigners never smoke opium, they appear incredulous, and ask, "Why did you teach us to smoke it?" And it is no use telling them that our predecessors, the Portuguese,

only supplied a want which they found already existing, and that the East India Company simply followed their example. At one of the villages where our coolies rested to-day I sat me down, as it turned out, on a bench at the door of one of the innumerable opium-shops. The manager, a good-looking young man, bare to the waist (as is, most sensibly, the whole population at this season), asked me to come in, which I did. He was engaged behind a counter filling little cups with a measure of 6 *fên* (38 grains) prepared opium, which sells from 12 to 16 cash (about a halfpenny), and provides pabulum for six or seven pipes. After refusing a pipe myself, the youngster asked me to give him some "give-up-smoking" medicine. I could only give him advice, which was to stop smoking, which at his age—seventeen—should not be difficult, but in such surroundings he is bound to take to it all the same.

We passed another *ngai* (precipice) with a solid stone wall encircling its summit, and then ascended to a yellow sandstone country where the soil was markedly less fertile, the rice backward, and the maize 3 feet instead of 6 feet. We rested on the top of the plateau, which my aneroid made to be 900 feet above Chungking, under a grove of about a dozen most magnificent *hoangko* (banyan, *ficus infectoria*) trees, while our "boy" (age 40, with moustache and hair turning grey) went forward to arrange about our night's lodging and to lay the cloth for our supper. The view was very extensive and it was deliciously cool, the last three days' almost constant temperature of 95° by day and 86° by night having somewhat fatigued us both, but there was no wind, only the gentlest of breezes,* a peculiarity of Szechuan, as shown by the splendidly symmetrical growth of the thick-foliaged banyans which crown every summit; below are seats and a shrine (for it is deservedly a sacred tree) where the villagers congregate to cool themselves,

* Pliny describing the land of the Seres speaks of the "lenissimis ventis" which can hardly apply to anything but China proper, the road hither, through Central Asia, traversing countries of notoriously extreme climates.

and some to spread their opium mats, after their day's work. Though unable to share Sir Edwin Arnold's ecstacies, I yet bless the Buddhists for having rendered sacred all the most picturesque sites, and for having preserved groves of shade trees round their temples from the axes of the utilitarian natives, who are doing their best by utterly deforesting their mountains to aid the march of the Central Asian desert into the north-west, where already floods and drought are alternately depopulating the provinces which were once the home of the Chinese race and for many centuries the granary of the Empire. The view here was not unlike that across the "small" river at Chungking, with its highly cultivated valleys and broken sandstone ridges, with innumerable groves and scattered villages—a rich peaceful scene with, however, a reminder of troubles in the frequent cities of refuge which now merely serve to add a touch of romance to the charming picture at our feet. Beyond, and bounding the western horizon, was another of the limestone "cross ranges," in a valley of which lay our immediate destination, still some 10 miles distant. Scantily clad children were playing about, little club-footed girls even managing to climb the trees, in total disregard of us "Ocean Ogres," who are such a terror to the women and children of the more easterly provinces.

At half-past four o'clock we were off again, and in three hours' time had crossed the intervening basin and arived at the market-town of Tieh Chang Pu (iron-yard shop) picturesquely nestled in a steep-walled wooded valley through which coursed a rapid stream, soon to be still more swollen by the downpour in which, as seems usual here, the three days of extreme heat and closeness came to a pleasing, if only temporary, end. Here, for the first time, we had a room with a "practicable" window (they are usually fixtures, heavy lattice-work covered with opaque oiled paper) from which we had a look-out on to the hill side. Our elevation here was identical with that of our late halting-place. While just sitting down to the neatly laid table, which our boy religiously sets out much the same as at

home, with flowers when procurable, however poor the provender and however filthy the room, a card was sent in bearing the name of the military commander of the district, and shortly followed by the "Great Man" himself, in full dress, who, though at first slightly abashed by the presence of a lady, was soon prevailed upon to sit down and talk. He had the impression that I was myself in the Chinese military service, whence derived I know not, unless from my boy, who always tries to make us out to be grand people, and is particularly indignant at the depreciatory character of "English trader" which has been inserted in my this year's Consular pass. However, I told the official we wanted nothing, were quite comfortable where we were, and asked him to stay to supper, which he refused to do. The magistrates see us safely through their respective jurisdictions by a convoy of two ragged (invariably opium-smokers) *tsai jen*, or "runners from their *yamên*," of most incredibly disreputable appearance, whom we found perfectly useless, and whom we seldom caught sight of until they turned up at the end of their beat to receive a gratuity which amounted to about what we should have paid two useful coolies for the same distance. In the night calm that followed the thunderstorm we found this, at first sight cheerful-looking room, no more pleasant than its predecessors, being built out over the pig-sty, and other places still more odoriferous, while biting insects were even more attentive then usual.

*July* 16, 1892.—After a hot, comfortless night and a toilet by candle-light, started at half-past four, our path leading up a lovely glen. The escape into the sweet country air, coupled with the impression from the omnipresent antithetical couplets, adorning with their gay colours the filthy shelters that disgrace the fair country, led to our here imitating Silas Wegg and dropping into poetry with the antithetical fit still on our brain. It was thus we sang as at early dawn we trudged up the lovely mountain side, fresh from the night rain :

We've slept in many an inn before,
But never in an inn like this;
The insect life and odours rare
Made full "celestial" bliss.

Oh! Chinese land with beauties rife!
A Heaven on earth to see,
Could but all thy "celestial" life
To Heaven transported be!

If one could only avoid the towns and carry a tent that would keep out rain and sunshine, nothing would be easier or more delightful than land travel in this charming region; but then the difficulty would be to find a vacant spot 10 feet square upon which to pitch the tent, and I fear this difficulty would be found insuperable, as, except on some of the higher mountain sides, every inch of the land is cultivated, and even these are covered with a dense growth which it would take much labour to clear. The use of a tent would also in the populous parts be sure to bring one into unpleasant collision with the inhabitants, as was the experience of Mr. Pratt, the naturalist, who, on the grassy slopes of the high, sparsely populated mountains which fill the far western portion of the province, tried a tent as the only shelter procurable, when an unseasonable snowstorm caused the superstitious people to drive him out of the country. We ascended 800 feet to the top of a pass, where the aneroid showed 27.25, or about 2000 feet above Chungking. The path continued along the edge of a thick wood, which covered the mountain top, until we turned to descend through a substantial gateway of red sandstone (the limestone is too much for the Chinese), by which we passed through a crenelated wall built to defend the pass and run up through the jungle to the crests of the mountains on either side. These fortifications might be of use if the people possessed the leaders and the spirit to defend them, but "unfortunately," says old Marco, "the Chinese Mantsze (as he calls them) have no spirit." At any rate, in what I have seen of Chinese warfare, fortifications were seldom

defended, and in the rare cases when they were defended generally led to the eventual massacre of the defenders. We descended from this range, called Ta Shan Tsu Shan, or "Bamboo Mountains," into a continuation of the broken red sandstone country that extends to the Min River and across it until it reaches its western boundary at the foot of the lofty cliffs of the sacred mountain of Omi.

The air was cool, but close, as we again traversed fields of tall millet, maize, paddy (now in ear), alternating with groves of firs, tallow trees, and varnish trees on the higher ridges, water gushing forth on all sides, and often making our path the bed of a small torrent. There was a great crowd in the winding, seemingly never-ending, narrow village street, through which our chairs had to be squeezed, until suddenly they were set down; the chair coolies either couldn't or wouldn't understand our orders to proceed, and there was nothing to do but to wait patiently until rescued by some of our men who had gone on to find a place for our lunch, and who must have been close by and expecting us. The benefit of the sweating system I have described above hardly extends to the employer and occupant of the chair, who is looked upon as a piece of baggage to be shunted and got rid of as best may be. In the present case there was some dispute as to the distance we were to be carried for the pittance which these miserable objects, who formed the lowest ring of the "sweated"—and to whose feeble powers our safety had been, willy-nilly, entrusted—had bargained for. Unfortunately, a chair journey at this season is the only safe mode of travel to the sun-fearing Western. We were ultimately rescued, and were glad to get away, after a shorter rest than usual, from this dirty hamlet into a country delightfully cut up into combes and glens till we reached the hamlet of San Chio (Three Bridges), beyond which, on the top of a rise, we rested in a large, roomy, and exceedingly dirty and dilapidated restaurant, built astride the roadway (which passes under its roof a distance of 50 yards or so), and shut off at each end with

heavy gates made of stout, round, vertical rails set in a solid frame reaching to the low roof; the interior was partitioned off by like means, and with its gloom and dirt one might have fancied oneself in a Chinese gaol, but that the coolies were seated at tables sipping their tea. Shortly before this we passed the only building with stone walls we had seen. That the Chinese do not use stone for their buildings in a country where stone is so easily accessible, and where their ancestors appear to have lived entirely in rock chambers, which are found scattered throughout the innumerable cliffs of the sandstone basin of Szechuan, can, I think, only be attributed to the difficulty of working the limestone and to the porosity of the sandstone in a climate reeking with moisture all the year round. This building was partly excavated out of the rock; the altars, Buddhas, and Lohan (the eighteen disciples) being all carved *in situ*, with a natural rock overhead. In fact, there is scarcely one of the myriad sandstone precipices which break up the Szechuan landscape, from whatever point viewed, but is adorned with a Buddha or an inscription carved. Whether, owing to the fact of its having been the province through which the early Buddhist missionaries made their way into China, crossing Thibet on their road from India, or whether it is due to the awe inspired by the grand precipitous outlines of the mountains, or to the ease with which the soft sandstone formation lends itself to sculpture, or to all these causes combined, certain it is that no portion of our globe exhibits more tangible evidence of devout religious feeling than does this Chinese province of Szechuan. It is to Buddhism what Bavaria is to Catholicism, a land where religious influences have yielded outward expression at every turn, and where the hardy peasant and the chaffering shopkeeper alike offer daily sacrifice of incense and devote no small share of their slender resources to what, according to our personal ethical standard, we class as devout worship of heaven or grovelling propitiation of unseen beings potent alike for good and evil.

Rain fell heavily to-day, and waterfalls came down on all

sides from the mist-encircled heights and descended in noisy cadence from step to step of the terraced paddy-fields, through which the narrow-paved path wound. As if the rock carvings on the valley sides were not enough, low square stone pillars were set up here and there like milestones, surmounted by a carved "monster" head with the four characters *O Mi To Fo* engraved below—the Chinese sounds for Omita Buddha. Many women sat at their street doors spinning cotton with distaffs. In the afternoon we again ascended the walls of the valley basin, and were carried along a narrow footpath by the edge of a precipice, the view from the window of the comfortable sedan-chair being the Chinese equivalent to that from a pullman-car on the Canadian Pacific—a sense of luxury seasoned by a spice of danger. At length we brought a long and interesting day to a close by our entry at dusk (7 P.M) into the crowded market-town of San Chiang Chên (Three Rivers). Although it was now dusk, yet the long-winding narrow street was almost impassable, and being, as in all these market-towns, entirely covered in with a plank roof was pitch dark, but for the rare lanterns with which these thrifty people are as economical as with anything else. Imagine a Lowther Arcade a mile long, through which passes the main road uniting two provincial cities, the whole traffic of the country confined to it —beasts of burden, biped and quadruped, water-carriers, manure-carriers, ponies, and sedan-chairs; and add to this—market-day, and the narrow pathway made still narrower by the wares out between the open shops and the road. Bear in mind that this road is never cleaned, and that the gutters reek with a black slime of garbage, festering under a July temperature in the 29th parallel. The shouting and execrations exchanged as our coolies forced their way through to the inn added to the annoyance, and we were thankful when at last we were set down in the filthy court-yard of "Quiet Abundance." Here we procured a room with no opening but the door, and spent a dismal night waiting for the dawn—Chinese all wide awake, talking, eating, drinking, and shouting until long past midnight.

*July* 17.—Dressed by candle-light, and started off on foot ahead of our bearers as soon as the first glimpse of dawn enabled us to pick our way through the nude recumbent forms of the inhabitants stretched in the roadway. Got out into a picturesque country, with bright red soil contrasting admirably with the deep green of the July foliage, and in the cool morning air soon forgot our woes of the previous night. Breakfasted at Ma Ta Chie after crossing the stream, whose course we were following down to the valley of the Min, which we are now approaching on a handsome three-arched bridge adorned with an elegantly carved stone parapet such as all the old bridges hereabouts appear to have been originally built with. Few parapets are now seen, however; these are the first portions of the bridge to decay, and appear never to be renewed nowadays; then an arch falls in and is replaced by a couple of young fir-stems lashed together—to which, however, heavily laden porters, club-footed women, and even ponies seem to make no objection. A curious thing about the bridges hereabouts, the roadway of which is mostly composed of large monoliths stretching from pier to pier, is that the stone slabs are underlaid with fir-poles. We passed a picturesquely situated temple, outside of which a feast was in progress to celebrate a subscription of 100 cash apiece (4*d.*) contributed towards the repair of the building. Meat (*i.e.*, pork) was being eaten, a curious instance of the neglect of dogma that pervades this practical people as, of course, the Buddhists are vegetarians, a rule strictly observed by the bonzes, but absolutely neglected by the laity, except on special occasions when fasting is conjoined with prayer.

Continuing on through the paddy-fields which filled the narrow valley, and following down the red-coloured swollen burn to near its outfall, the path led under the square port-hole-like entrances of some easily accessible Mantze caves. (Mantze barbarian here meaning "the savages.") As is well known, the precipitous red sandstone region of Szechuan, extending (along the Yangtze basin) from Kuei Chou Fu in the East to

Ping Shan in the West, is honeycombed with these homes of its ancient inhabitants—"Mantze," as the modern Chinese calls them, a term now employed in this province in speaking of Thibetans and barbarians generally. Who these Mantze were, and when they were driven out, traditions state not. Probably they were akin to the Menia and other tribes now inhabiting the high mountainous country on the north-west border, and were driven gradually westward as their kinsmen the Thibetans are at this day being slowly forced westward by the pertinacity of the effeminate Chinaman. At any rate, there can be no doubt that these aborigines, whoever they were, had attained to considerable civilisation, and if one wonders how they can have selected such damp, dark habitations when the vast forests, with which the country was then covered, afforded them an inexhaustible supply of fine timber, the best explanation probably is—the defence from beasts of prey which were formerly extremely numerous, and of which the Chinese of to-day even appear to possess an abnormal dread.

That the ancient Mantze should have lived and apparently flourished in such abodes is not more remarkable than that any human being should be able to remain alive and propagate his species in the huts and midden heaps of a modern Chinese city like Chungking. And these Mantze, to judge by the carvings on the doorways and the high finish attending their rock excavations, must have reached a fair state of civilisation. One of the cave houses we now explored with the aid of wax vestas was two-storied, and went back 100 feet with ample headroom everywhere. One doorway we measured was 3 feet high by 2 feet 6 inches wide; others were somewhat larger. This may be called the outer doorway or porch; then come door jambs a foot deep, and then the inner door proper about 6 inches smaller all round. The inner doorway has grooves in which it is plain that thick wood planks were slipped down on edge, one upon the other, until the doorway was thus barred, all except a few inches at the top, which formed the open slot through which the planks were thus let into their grooves from

the inside. So the Mantze must have worked in wood and cut down timber. The caves are cut out in a series of rectangular rooms, with low recesses for beds, and small ones higher up for household utensils. One such room had a small circular opening in the centre of its floor just large enough to drop through, and leading to a vaulted chamber, possibly used as a granary, for which it would be suitable from its comparative dryness. A careful exploration with the spade and hatchet would, doubtless, reveal something more as to the habits of the Mantze, though it might not be easy to distinguish between their remains and those of the beggars and bad characters who have since dwelt in them, and who still occupy the caves more easily accessible. Thus we found the exploration far from pleasant, but we thought ourselves, at one time, rewarded for our pains in discovering, in a distant corner, a heap of bones, and among them a human skull. This we brought out in triumph to the daylight, thinking we had now proof positive as to the fact whether the ancient Mantze were allied to the brachycephalic Mongol or to the dolichocephalic Thibetan. By the time, however, that our matches had given out, and we had emerged into the narrow path on the cliff side, the invisible crowd that haunts the apparently wildest and remotest solitudes in China had become visible and filled up the road below, all agog to know what tricks we were up to. Assuming a reproachful tone in view of the existence of unburied human remains, we asked whose the skull might be, when the small boys, who seem to monopolise the intelligence of the country, as far as a Western traveller is concerned, told us it was that of a beggar. We set it down tenderly on the threshold and passed on, sadder if not wiser men.

The glen narrowed at its mouth to little more than the width of the stream, which was there crossed by one of the picturesque covered Szechuan bridges, with a curly-roofed *likin* station and temple, one on either side, connecting it with the red cliffs. These, green-topped and pagoda crowned, formed the portals of the valley which here debouched into that of the

fast-flowing Min river now at our feet. A fine stone jetty led down into the water, and nothing but the river separated us from the long-looked for city of Kiating, the crenelated walls of which, laved by the ruby waves, now lay before glistening in the evening sunshine. Beyond lay Mount Omi, our destination, wrapped in the clouds which enveloped the western horizon. Our tedious chair-journey was drawing to an end, and we took our seats in the ferry-boat with no little elation that the ten days' overland trip, to which we had on setting out looked forward with some misgivings, was now happily accomplished.

# CHAPTER IV

## AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT OMI

THE best Inn's best Room—Three Rivers of Kiating—All in Flood—Colossal Buddha—First View of Omi—Torrential Rain—Crosses on the Roadway—Great Buddha Temples—Chinese Rubbings—Embroideries—Missions—China Inland and Roman Catholic—Hotel Bill—Suchi—Pilgrims—Silk, and White Wax—City of Omi—Huge Bell—Bronze Pagoda—Limestone Ravine—Iron Suspension Bridge—Pair of Flying Bridges—Butterfly Collectors—Wan Nien Sze—Paying Coolies—Lohan and Hoangko Trees—Bronze Pusien on Elephant—Most Ancient Chinese Building—Pilgrims' Dress—Great Guest-room—Dining with a Chief Priest—Vegetarian Banquet—Barefaced Begging—Danger from Tigers.

*July* 18.—Torrential rain. Last night's fine sunset turned out to be but a momentary break in the wet weather which set in last week, which, while it has cooled the air, has stopped our further progress. We put up last night at the best inn in one of the best-looking towns we have yet seen. It is kept by a "graduate," and is patronised by officials accordingly. It is gorgeous in gilding and red paint, and to the high guest-room, allotted to our humble selves, we ascended from the street through a succession of court-yards with the usual fish-ponds, flower-vases, *and dirt.* For, truth to tell, fine as is the accommodation at first sight, the floor has the usual accumulation of the mud of ages, covering the original concrete with hard, slippery undulations of compressed filth, which the continuous rain keeps moistened as the men come and go across the yard to our quarters. Woe betide you if, in dressing, you drop a sock upon the floor, or still worse, your pocket-handkerchief or

towel; neither can be used again until thoroughly washed with soap and water. The smells, too, were of the usual nature, and when, in the morning, we were informed that the "Ya" (which our road to Omi crosses) was in flood and impassable, and that we must wait for the water to fall, our depression was as great as had been our elation the night before.

Kiating Fu—*i.e.*, the prefectural city of Kiating—stands at the junction of two large rivers, as does nearly every city of note on the Yangtze and the Min, all the way from Hankow to Chêng Tu, a distance of 1500 miles. The Min is regarded by the Chinese as the main stream of the Great River, owing to its leading from Chêng Tu, the provincial capital, and to its flowing through a more productive country, and so being more useful to traffic than is the larger body of water coming from the south-west, into which the Min discharges at Suifu, and which we still call the Yangtze. The river which unites with the Min to form the peninsula on which Kiating stands is the Ya, a stream of considerable volume, which has its sources in the glaciers of Chinese Thibet. The Ya washes the southern and the Min the eastern walls of the city, the site of which rises to the north-west, where its walls enclose a good deal of hilly ground. The streets are wide and clean (for China), and the town made a pleasant impression upon us, although the "hoodlums" were nearly as aggressive as in Chungking, and delighted in running after A.'s chair (a covered bamboo sedan from South China) and shouting after her *K'an yang po tse tso lung tse—i.e.*, "Look at the foreign woman in a cage." A break in the rain enabled us to walk on the walls in the afternoon and admire the vast waters that were imprisoning us, now at the height of the summer flood—on one side, the roseate waters of the Min running four to five knots; on the other, the orange-coloured Ya running fully eight or nine knots. The water was one-third up the wall, and the gates in the lower part of the town opened direct on to the flood, the water-coolies filling their buckets without passing the gateways. It was a grand sight to stand at the angle of the wall where the two rivers met,

A Typical Road(1) in Szechuan.

and formed a dangerous rapid, known as the Ta Fo, or "Green Buddha" rapid, which sets direct on to the opposite shore, immediately below the break in the cliffs through which we had emerged the day previous, when our ferry-boat landed us safely at a practicable gate above the rapid, after hauling up stream by the aid of a bamboo hawser, lying in the bed of the river immediately under the cliff. So strongly does the current set on to this cliff that it is asserted that part of the river disappears under it. Descending boats manage to pass without accident only by rowing with might and main against the set of the current which would otherwise dash them with fatal force against the rocks. But the last defence is a colossal Buddha, some 200 feet in height, carved out of the cliff side, who sits calmly with his feet in the water, and his hands on his knees—a grove of shrubs for his hair and long pendent grasses forming his eyebrows. This meritorious work is said to have been carried out by a pious monk of the Tang period, who made it his life's labour, living in a cave, which is still shown, close by. The red sandstone is soft and easily sculptured, and no doubt the holy man found many willing helpers. A square thirteen-storied pagoda of Indian type and extensive temples almost entirely hidden in luxuriant sub-tropical foliage, adorn the surrounding heights. Thence we retraced our steps and walked inland along the wall to where it rises up the hill to a height of 200 or 300 feet above the river level, and commands an extensive prospect over the city and the broken plain beyond. Vegetable gardens, with not a few fine trees interspersed, fill this angle of the wall, and the country outside is unusually wooded with a great variety of trees and many fine bamboo copses, which appear to flourish to perfection in the red ochreous soil. We stood here undisturbed, away from the inhabited portion of the city, and, looking down from the ramparts, gazed westwards, hoping to catch a glimpse of our long-looked-for goal—the sacred mountain said to stand out from the plain in a gigantic precipice a mile in height—but now mysteriously veiled in

heavy banks of cloud. In the foreground stretched a wide expanse of water, broken by long wooded islands—the flooded valleys of the Ya and Tung rivers, which unite their waters a mile or more above the city. Not a boat was to be seen, nor were any villages discernible; it looked more like the grand solitude and wild features of some Canadian landscape than a view in populous China. Suddenly the clouds broke, the setting sun shone forth, and there, about thirty miles distant, rose up the dark range of the western mountains, with Omi's peak, as Baber describes it, pointing a thumb-nail to the sky. Darkness quickly set in, and with it the rain returned, in which we walked back to our hotel with small hope of being able to make a start on the morrow. We were, however, most anxious to get away, and spent the evening packing, so as to be ready to make a start at daylight should it be possible.

*July* 19.—Torrential rains in the night, and the water came through freely, drenching poor A. to the skin. She, trying to escape in the dark to our sitting-room, which, though entirely open on one side, appeared to have a sounder roof, had her shoes pulled off in the sticky mud of the floor, and we got into a nice mess generally. As soon as it was light I cleaned off, in a natural shower-bath, taking advantage of a waterfall from an angle of the roof in one corner of the court-yard, while A., with some difficulty, procured a hot tub and the needful privacy in which to make use of it. An early breakfast of hot coffee and Swiss milk reconciled us once more to existence as we made up our minds to another day's wait and set to work to write up our diaries, with our feet in the mud and the rain splashing upon us in fine spray from the court-yard pavement. It cleared up at noon, and we ferried across the Min to examine the Ta-fo-sze, or "Temples of the Great Buddha." We set foot ashore at the landing whence we had originally crossed the river, and ascended by a fine, broad, easy pathway, cut in wide steps out of the native rocks, and which wound round the face of the rock and in rear of the Great Buddha's head. The *gamins* had amused themselves

by painting huge red crosses on the pathway, upon which they imagined we should not dare to walk; we were, however, far more seriously incommoded by the green mould which overspread the stone staircase, rendering walking slippery and dangerous. The temples are chiefly notable for the many inscriptions on tablets of slate, engraved from the pen of distinguished visitors. We bought from the priest a collection of some thirty remarkably well-executed rubbings of these interesting antiquities for subsequent mounting as *kakemonos*. Some had boldly drawn landscapes and flowering shrubs, intermingled with the elegant Chinese characters written in various styles, which are much appreciated by native connoisseurs; the meaning recondite—praise of the scenery, exhortations to virtue and consequent peace of mind, with appropriate quotations from the classics. We paid 2 dollars for the bundle—one of the most interesting souvenirs of our trip. There were verses by the celebrated Sung dynasty poet, Su Tung-po, and odes by two *tsai hiang* (Prime Ministers), also of the Sung period.

The great Buddha himself was, as might have been expected, much worn after sitting so many years in this very damp climate with no shelter but the trees on his head, yet the features were just distinguishable. The foliage all round was so thick that we were unable to find a point of view for a photograph, and one taken from the walls of the city opposite was unsatisfactory owing to the half-mile of water intervening. We returned to our inn in the rain, which had recommenced, and boiled our thermometer again; the average readings so far made Kiating 990 feet above the sea, a rise of 450 feet in the 1300 *li*, say 400 miles, which this city is distant by water from Chungking.

*July* 20.—Rain! Rain! Sent out scouts to see if the ferry over the Ya, which we have to cross 10 miles higher up, was working. Report came back—whether true or not, difficult to say—No; but in no case could we have travelled in such a downpour as this. Fortunately it is comparatively cool here

in rainy weather and many of the evil smells in the inn have been washed away. Kiating is the centre of a considerable silk production, that and white wax being the two great specialities of the prefecture, and we passed some part of the day inspecting embroideries, some of which we purchased at very reasonable prices. However rude and contemptuous is the behaviour of the Chinese generally to the barbarian, they are civil enough when it comes to a question of earning dollars from him, and, indeed, this is usually the traveller's only means of conciliating their goodwill. Hence it is a misfortune for missionaries, who are the sole representatives of Europe in these distant regions, to be so poorly paid that they have to haggle over every cash like a native, and thus forfeit the only title to respect which the foreigner possesses in the eyes of this sordid and supercilious people.

Kiating city contains about 60,000 inhabitants and boasts two missions—one old-established Roman Catholic Mission and one China Inland Mission, established four years ago. Three zealous missionaries reside at the last, and a dispensary is attached to the preaching-hall; they have quietly lived down opposition and are not molested by the populace, and, to their credit be it said, have not yet effected a single baptism. Whatever one's opinions as to the need of the Chinese for Western missionaries generally, or as to the right of these latter to establish themselves all over the country as they are doing, one cannot but admire the self-sacrificing conduct of these latter apostles, nor doubt that their exemplary conduct must tell in time upon the native estimate of the foreigner's character.

I called at the Roman Catholic Mission, a fairly spacious, but unpretending range of Chinese buildings outside the north gate, where I saw the Father, who told me that he had been here twenty-eight years. Speaking of opium-smoking, he gave it as his opinion that, whereas thirty years ago only two or three per cent. of the adult male population smoked, now smokers might be estimated at a fourth of the whole. Like all other

missionaries, he looked on the Chinese as ruining themselves by the habit, although to the casual observer the people look strong, and certainly are most prolific. We afterwards went on to the wall again to look at the torrent rushing by, which, but for the firm foundation of natural rock upon which the wide stone walls are laid, must have infallibly undermined them. We saw framework of houses and roofs sweeping down. The weather cleared up towards nightfall and we hope really to be released to-morrow.

*July* 21.—Rain over and freshet subsiding. Our fortnight, so far, has coincided with the Chinese period *Shio-shu* (Small Heat). We are now entering the fortnightly period entitled Great Heat, which we are thus fortunately escaping from. Paid our hotel bill, which, after the customary wrangle, was settled by our boy at 4960 cash (17*s.*), this heavy sum including "compensation for disturbance," caused by permitting two foreigners to lodge there. We provided our own food, but patronised the landlord's wine (to keep out the damp). Our servants paid tariff rates for themselves, making a gain on the 250 cash per day extra which we allowed them while travelling. At eight o'clock we got our train under way, and, emerging from the walls, found ourselves on the great western road, a fine stone pathway, fully 3 feet wide. It was a hot, sunny morning, and if any air was moving we were entirely shut out from it by the luxuriant vegetation on either hand, so that after an hour or two's walking, we were glad to mount our sedans. We were ascending the left bank of the Ya river, which flowed at our left hand, about a quarter of a mile wide, a continuous unnavigable rapid. In places the path was cut out of cliffs overhanging the whirlpools; again, it turned inland, mounting up wooden steeps, and then descending to boulder-flats covered with thick bush and evidently seldom inundated. Here again the red sandstone cliffs were dotted with Mantze caves, their truly cut square openings looking like port-holes of a rock fortress. Soon after noon we reached the ferry, and crossed the swift-flowing river in wide flat-bottomed

ferry-boats without difficulty. A half-hour's walk on the other side, through delightfully wooded country, brought us to the town of Suchi (Joyous Stream), an important feeder of Kiating's silk, wax, and rice trade. Suchi is an unusually pleasing town, owing to its picturesque river of clear water—the "Omi"—the sixteen-arch low stone bridge by which it was approached, and the groves of magnificent banyans growing along its banks and shading the waterside houses from the almost tropical rays of the mid-day sun. We took tiffin in a *ch'a-shi* (tea—food), and secured a table overlooking the river, which flowed down from the sacred mountain, and the feeling that we were now really on our holiday ground added to our enjoyment of the meal. The inn, too, was full of returning worshippers, with their yellow incense satchels and pilgrim staves telling of the coming climb from which only one more inn might now separate us. We, too, as intending pilgrims, were treated by the people with a politeness which had so far been sadly wanting. In the 40 *li* to Suchi we had already risen 150 feet above Kiating, and to Omi Hsien, or the district city of Omi, only 40 *li* farther, the rise is another 100 feet. The stone path wound through luxuriant fields of paddy bordered by apple trees, *fraxinus* (an ash tree on which the wax insect is placed to deposit its valuable product), fine *pterocarpa* (the winged willow), and fir trees. At times the path followed the bank of the Omi river, now reduced to the size of the Severn, its banks in places not unlike those of the English river, with its gentle hills and dark foliage. At five we passed through the crowded, dirty, but fairly wide street of the market town of *Chên Chia Ch'ang* (Chên family market), emerging from which we were gladdened at last by the sight of Omi itself towering above its attendant ranges of foot-hills. At 7.30, just after dusk, we entered the walls of Omi city, and ended a tiring but delightful day in one of the crowded inns which are the *raison d'être* of the pilgrim city. The city of Omi is a walled quadrangle, a mile each side, built on a flat immediately at the base of the Omi foot-hills. The inn was exceptionally filthy and crowded

Ancient Bronze Pagoda in Shên Chi Sze Temple on Mount Omi. Its surface is covered with Miniature Buddhas. Made probably in the Fifteenth Century.

with pilgrims, whose noise, coupled with the heat and the mosquitoes, promised us another comfortless night.

*July* 22.—We were glad to rise at dawn (5 A.M.) and escape from the noisome caravansary on to the quiet town wall, whence we had a glorious view of Omi and our first sniff of fresh mountain air. As the sun rose, Omi towered 10,000 feet above our heads, a rich purple mass, gradually changing into blue, and then disappearing altogether as the mists rose like vast columns of smoke from the poppy-filled valleys at its foot. We returned for a light breakfast and managed to get our train off by half-past six, starting in company with numerous parties of pilgrims, male and female, the latter stumping gaily along despite their poor crippled feet; a few, like ourselves, had chairs; but rich and poor were all dressed in their best clothes, and we could not but feel that we, in our uncouth and travel-stained garments, made but a poor show amidst the festive crowd, although the sedan chairs following us, to-day for the last time, testified to our respectability. A gradual but steady ascent through groves of ash and pine brought us to the first of the seventy-two objects of veneration—the Shên Chi Sze, a ruinous temple in which is a huge bell said to weigh 2500 catties, and a bronze pagoda about 15 feet high, covered with thousands of miniature Buddhas cast and then engraved on its surface. These antiquities mostly date from the Ming dynasty—often from the reign of the Emperor Wan Li (fifteenth century) and his devout Empress. Like other objects of interest on Mount Omi, this pagoda is roofed over and fenced in with wooden palings so as to protect it from too assiduous worshippers, and thus the view is obstructed and, but for the bright morning sun, we should have found it impossible to photograph. It is an interesting relic of ancient religious fervour, but as a work of art of no particular interest.

From Shen Chi Sze on we passed up a small terraced valley until we came face to face with the first limestone cliffs of Omi and through a natural gateway by which the Omi river breaks its way and makes possible the precipitous path by which we

enter the mountain. For like the sacred Fujiyama so has Mount Omi its entrance, its courts, its roofs, and pinnacles, all carefully named and mapped out. Winding round on a path cut out of the cliff side we enter an amphitheatre with numerous waterfalls gushing from its walls to feed the Omi river which winds along its floor. The heights are crowned with pine forests, and patches of maize compete with banks of fern for the narrow spaces available below. Again, the ravine narrows, and an iron suspension bridge, the first of the kind we had seen, leads to some temples on the left bank. A carved stone tablet tells us that this is Chang-sho-chiao, or "Bridge of Long Life," and that it was erected in the time of the Mings—a period apparently as fruitful in public works as these later times seem to be deficient in them. These bridges are common in the West and are all on the same plan—parallel chains made fast to the rocks on each bank without any supplementary support, These chains have short, loose planks laid transversely across them to walk on, the whole being almost rudimentary in its simplicity, as are all Chinese attempts at engineering. Thanks to the goodness of the material—charcoal-smelted iron—these bridges seem to last notwithstanding the extreme tension to which the chains are subjected: the most notable hereabouts is that over the Tung river at Luting, which has a span of 400 feet and was built in the seventeenth century, and over it passes the whole traffic between China and Thibet.

Winding to the left and creeping along close into the side of the precipice, the path having been washed out in places by the recent storms, we turned into a delightful side valley, and followed up an affluent of the Omi river until we came to the romantically situated temple and restaurant built astride the rocky peninsula dividing the two streams which unite at its foot. Two ancient stone bridges give access to the peninsula, crossing the deep gorge cut out by the roaring stream on either side of it, and provide this charming spot with its appropriate name of Soang-fei-ch'iao (Pair of Flying Bridges). At the restaurant built on the point of the rock looking down into the

foaming waters on either hand, we took our tiffin and discussed the advisability of making our first halt here, for we felt we were satisfied and, whatever more might be in store for us farther on, we wanted nothing better than this as yet. But we had barely risen 1000 feet and it was hot. Tiffin finished, I scrambled down to the bottom of the glen and, seated on a rock beside the limpid water, at last found coolness and peace. Of the many natives in the temple and tea-house, none cared to follow me down there, and I smoked a cigar undisturbed by requests to try its flavour or anxious inquiries as to the cost per foot of the flannel of my shirt. Great, however, as was our enjoyment of the spot, we found the temple too small and crowded to afford us the accommodation we required for ourselves and followers, so we decided to go on to the renowned Wan Nien Sze or "Temple of Ten Thousand Years," which forms usually the pilgrims' first halting-place in their ascent of the mountain.

While resting at the "Flying Bridges" we were accosted by a pleasant-mannered Chinese who carried a butterfly net, and who actually seemed pleased to see us. Presently two more men joined him, carrying boxes in which rows of the varied and gorgeous butterflies which adorn these valleys were neatly pinned down. They turned out to be collectors in the pay of Mr. Pratt, and they were also Roman Catholic converts—a double title to our sympathy, which explained their friendliness. They offered to present us with many beautiful specimens which they declared to have no value, but we did not care to burden ourselves with them.

A further ascent of 1000 feet brought us in good time to our destination for the present, and to the terminus of our sedan-chair journey, Wan Nien Sze. The road crosses a wide valley, entered by the pass of Soang-fei-chio, from which once more a view of the Omi summit is obtainable; it then ascends a steep staircase, passing under a fortress-like archway with pavilion over it enclosing a shrine dedicated to Lingwun (the soul), and entering an open court with temples on three sides. From

the fourth side, and at right angles to the road by which we had entered, rises a succession of flights of stone steps, 15 or 20 feet wide, a grand staircase going up the only practicable approach to the flat-topped, steep-sided hill buttress, upon which stand the ranges of temples and out-buildings known as Wan Nien Sze. Groves of fine old trees surround the entrance, and the air of repose and comfort, which characterises Buddhist temples everywhere, is strongly impressed upon the weary pilgrim, inviting him to rest awhile in the sacred precincts before setting out upon his further 7000 feet climb to the Holy of Holies on the top.

We were shown into a side court-yard with spacious guest-rooms, kitchens, and servants' quarters built round it, a seemingly most delightful retreat after our late noisome quarters in the inns on the way. It was really *ching*, as the Chinese say, "peaceful," and, by shutting the outer door leading into the court-yard, we enjoyed absolute privacy. Only afterwards did we find the drawbacks to this haven of rest in the dank vegetation and wet soil of the court-yard and the intolerable odours from the kitchen-drains whenever the wind blew from that quarter. Lesser annoyances were the mosquitoes and scissor-grinders, whose name was legion. However, "Excelsior" was our motto, and it only depended upon ourselves to ascend to a region where these plagues should be unknown. Meanwhile we determined upon a few days' rest to enable us to recuperate, and, at the same time, to explore the surrounding country and examine at our leisure the antiquities in the temples in our immediate neighbourhood.

*July* 23.—Paid off our chair-coolies and porters, their contract terminating at Wan Nien Sze. The troublesome settlement—with wrangles over the cash, the number on a string (there should be 1000, but they are always short 20 to 30), the number of bad cash (*moa chien*), the allowance for the days we halted at Kiating, and the determination of the customary bonuses occupied our "boy" pretty well all the morning. The total came to $72, or, including inns and food, about £14 for

over 300 miles' journey, which had occupied in all just fifteen days.

We were now 3000 feet above sea level, and had reached the pleasant temperature of 79° day maximum, and 72° night minimum. The air was balmy, but still relaxing. Szechuan air is distinguished by its dampness and stillness, and these foot-hills of Mount Omi possess the same character. A wood surrounds the temple and continues up the hill-side, but the clearings are getting yearly larger, and our walks were mostly on paths leading through maize, which grew over our heads and entirely shut out any light air that might be moving. Although the sun shone hotly in the intervals between the many showers, usual here in summer, yet the higher mountains seemed constantly enveloped in a cloud. The trees that mostly attracted our attention were the rich-foliaged "Lohan" pine (*lohan* or disciples of Buddha) and the omnipresent *hoangko*. The temples themselves are by no means the always elegant, and often exquisitely beautiful, buildings one is accustomed to in other places. Those on Mount Omi are externally plain wooden buildings, unpainted. Internally they are adorned with the profuse gilding and brilliant colours which one usually looks for in Chinese temples, Buddhist and Taoist alike. Most of them contain fragments of older and more elaborate buildings which have succumbed to fire or old age, and which the lessened religious feeling of later times has rebuilt on an inferior scale. Our own temple of Wan Nien Sze, although the residence of an abbot, contains little remarkable; but immediately behind it, and forming part of the same range of buildings, is the Chuan Tien, which gives shelter to the most striking monument of these parts—viz., the image of Pusien seated on an elephant, a magnificent bronze-casting on a colossal scale, dating from the seventh century A.D. (period of the Tang dynasty), which Baber reckoned as the greatest of his discoveries in this region, which he was the first European to explore. Mount Omi is specially sacred to Pusien who, the legend states, came across from India on his elephhant and established himself on his

mountain in the time of the Chin dynasty, A.D. 265–313. The image, which is almost pure copper, stands 16 Chinese feet high—over 17 English—and represents a young man with the usual Buddhist placid expression and the Buddhist exaggeration of feature: his elephant is only 11 feet high, and looks dwarfed by comparison. A lotus-flower resting on the animal's back forms the pedestal of the image. The temple enclosing the monument is, possibly with the exception of a few pagodas, the oldest extant building in China. It is built of small, very close-grained, hard-baked bricks, in the shape of a cube surmounted by a dome, utterly unlike anything Chinese. The exterior is not visible, being entirely hidden by the modern wooden building erected over it, an erection of rough, unpainted wood, very unsightly, and which absolutely precludes one from obtaining any view of the original building. This "protection" has more than once been destroyed by fire, on which occasions considerable damage has been done to the monument. No view or photograph can be taken of it: the "protection" forms part and parcel of the adjoining wooden temples and monks' dwellings, which entirely surround it. One comes upon the monument in a hole-and-corner way, and all "effect" is entirely destroyed. The inside walls are alone visible, and the illustrations in Captain Gill's book (copied in the Reverend Virgil Hart's) are surely imaginary. Between the inside walls and the bronze image a heavy stone palisade has been erected, some 7 feet high, so that it is not easy to see anything at all in the gloom of the windowless building. This very solid palisade was only put up a few years back to preserve the elephant from the assiduity of worshippers who, by the constant rubbing of copper cash on his limbs, were gradually destroying the beauty of their detail, which is very remarkable. Altogether the monument is a work of art, of so finished execution, and so true to nature, that Baber is probably right in doubting its being a purely Chinese conception. The enclosing building forms a square of 40 feet inside measurement, the walls being about 6 feet thick; on these is built a hemispherical dome, of

which Baber remarks: "To the eye the architectural process of squaring the circle is perfectly simple; the dome springs from a rim which stands a little back from the circle thus formed and so gains a few additional feet of diameter and increased lightness of appearance."

Thousands of minute bronze Buddhas, placed in orderly rows on the edges of the bricks, decorate the interior wall: many of these are temporarily lodged there by Thibetan pilgrims, who credit the images with superior sanctity after a residence in this holy spot has been gone through.

In Buddhist lore Pusien is Samanta Bhadra Bodhisatva. He is the god of action, and his elephant signifies caution. Whether he was really an apostle from India, or whether he ever existed in the flesh at all, there seems to be now no evidence to prove. In the different persecutions that Buddhism has from time to time been subject to since its introduction into China, and in the destruction of its shrines and temples during one or more of the periodical revolutions, that have swept over the country like an all-destroying whirlwind, the old records have perished, and, for what concerns the historical part of their religion, the priests of to-day have to fall back on a scanty tradition and a lively imagination. It was just after Buddhism had reached its culminating point that the Emperor Hien Tung, who reigned from A.D. 860–876, melted down the bronzes—sacrificial vessels, and images together—into copper cash and made bonfires of the sacred books. Hence, even with the "Light of Asia" as a guide, it is difficult to feel a real interest in these old Buddhist worthies, who are objects of such sincere adoration by the Chinese, simply because it is impossible to feel sure that many, if not most, of them are not purely mythical. Pusien is lodged in the Yü-shu-chuan-tien (Brick Hall under Imperial edict), the central of the three temples erected under Imperial patronage and collectively known as Wan Nien Sze, a title which, meaning literally "the temple of 10,000 years," is in figurative language simply "His Imperial Majesty's Temple." Our lodging is in the front temple, called the Pi-lu-tien or "Hall of

Pilu," a name of Buddha; one of the most notable images in it is that of Wên-shu (Manjusri), the "God of Wisdom." He is represented seated on a lion, the emblem of courage. The rearmost of the three is the "Pure-water pond"—Peh-shui-chih, or "New Hall." All three compete for the patronage of pilgrims, and a foreigner, when he has made a donation in the first hall, is a little surprised to be asked for more as he passes into an adjoining court-yard, on the ground that the treasuries and *personnel* of the three "Halls" are quite separate and distinct.

*July 24th* to *July 27th.*—We escaped from our malodorous court-yard by sitting under the magnificent trees on the steep hill-side, our ears stunned by scissor-grinders. Heavy showers alternated with hot sunshine—real July weather. The altitude of 3200 feet we found gave us a pleasant but still relaxing climate, in which long walks were a toil and the *dolce far niente* of a pipe on the grass only too seductive. We lay on the grass under the trees and played chess, thinking the while of Mortimer Collins' charming ode to chess played on the lawns of Richmond, and watching the throngs of pilgrims filing up the long wide staircase with their staves; men and women dressed in clean blue and white garments, and shod with bright straw sandals, a rosette over the big toe and blue ribbons crossing the instep and tied above the ankle. Slung across their shoulders they carried the yellow incense bags (colour sacred to Buddha and to the Emperor), out of which they lit the joss-sticks at each shrine, dropping two or three copper cash into the offertory, kneeling and bowing devoutly, and then passing on up the mountain. For economy's sake the mass of the pilgrims make the whole ascent of 120 *li* in one day if they are able, and, marvellous to say, many club-footed women are among the number! Seven thousand feet above us was, we knew, to be found a counterpart of the bracing air of our island home, and so we reluctantly determined to leave our Capua with its warmth and sunshine, and climb up to the mysterious cloudland which repelled us fully as much as it

attracted us. We feared lest "striving to better, oft we mar what's well," should again prove only too true in our case, but go on we must, and so we made our arrangements to flit at early dawn next day. We reduced our baggage to six coolie loads by packing up all superfluities, and left them together with our two sedan chairs in charge of the chief priest, to be held to our order or until our return. We had accepted an invitation to dine with him on this last day, and soon after noon one of the acolytes called at our quarters to escort us to the banquet-chamber. This was the reception-room, and it had been decorated for the occasion by red hangings from the tables and blue silk embroideries covering the chairs. This guest-room was a spacious hall, handsomely furnished with carved rosewood chairs and tables, the present of a wealthy official from the capital (Chêntgtu). At the upper end was an altar with brass images and an incense burner, and the walls were hung with *käkemonos*, representing saints, sages, sacred texts, and laudatory and devout lucubrations presented by visitors celebrated for their caligraphy. The dining-table was set out with the usual *hors d'œuvres* of melon seeds, apricot seeds, sugared walnuts, sweet cakes and comfits, but with tea (grown on the mountain) for an accompaniment—wine, as well as fish, flesh, and fowl, being, of course, religiously excluded. We sat down four—our two selves, our "boy," who as *kuansze* (General Manager, or Gentlemanly Manager would be Burnand's translation) is a "personage," and no small one either, and the Chief Priest, whose joining himself in the feast conferred a distinguished honour on us. After nibbling away about an hour, and hearing till we were tired out of the poverty of the temple and its pressing needs, the dinner proper was served. This consisted of nine dishes, prepared, of course, from vegetables alone, and, strange to say, we found every one of the nine dishes most excellent. In ordinary Chinese dinners there is too much lard used in frying to please the European palate; but here, where all animal fat is forbidden, *ts'ai you*, or rape-seed oil, is the medium, and very good we found everything.

We particularly admired a curious dish of pumpkin-flower beignets, a sweet soup with ground nuts, and a preparation of bean curd with chopped mushrooms inside, reminding one of the flavour of toasted cheese. After the dinner came the Yuan-pu, or "Subscription Book of the Temple," a large album-like volume in which benefactors write their donations on huge "cards" of red paper which are pasted in, two to a page. Now came the tug of war. The priest wanted (so he said) one hundred taels, or at least a "fêng," as a shoe of sycee—fifty taels—is called hereabouts. We humbly suggested ten taels, pleading we had a long journey before us, and, as this is fully equivalent to a £10 donation in Europe, we thought we were being fairly liberal. Then the priest said we were surely not going to give less than an American missionary who had been there the summer before, and he triumphantly turned up a card upon which was written in big characters:

GREAT EMPIRE OF AMERICA,
LOO-EE-SI,
SIXTY TAELS.

This was a stumper, although we felt sure it could not be true. (We afterwards inquired of Mr. Lewis, who told us the amount was about six taels for a longer stay and a larger party.) At length I took the brush in my hand to write, and had just written:

GREAT EMPIRE OF ENGLAND,
BRITISH MERCHANT,
LEE-TEH-LO,"

and was commencing the word "ten" when an acolyte snatched the pen from my fingers. Ultimately, after a long squabble, and pointing out that we had many more temples to subscribe to, I succeeded in sticking to my original sum, much to their apparent chagrin, but to the credit of "foreign" determination. "They mean what they say," our "boy" explained to them.

The afternoon turned out very hot and close, so we ascended by 1000 stone steps to a knoll where we found a slight

breeze and the air perceptibly cooler. We enjoyed a lovely view, looking down on Wan Nien Sze, and the headland on which it stands, jutting out from an amphitheatre of steep forest-clad mountains, through which the Omi stream appears to have scooped out a wide valley with precipitous limestone walls. All above was cloudland, notwithstanding that the cliffs below were gilded with the setting sun, and that through the gap by which we had entered the mountain the plain of Kiating (if one may so call it by comparison) was distinctly visible, fading away into the dark distance of the eastern horizon. Some peasants warned us to hurry back, and not to be out in the woods after dark, a party of five men having been recently attacked by a tiger and all killed—"recently" may mean, however, at any time within the memory of men now living. No doubt the extensive clearings and the supplanting the forests by maize-fields has largely reduced the number of wild animals which abound in the surrounding ranges. Omi itself, at least the eastern slopes, may now be looked upon as a completely civilised mountain; the wilderness proper begins on the western slope.

# CHAPTER V

## ON THE SACRED MOUNTAIN'S SIDE

LIFE-SIZED Image of Tiger—Upwards and Onwards—Temple Breakfast—Delightful Pine Wood—Hua Yen Ting, the one Taoist Temple on Mountain—Destructive Fires—On the Brink of a Precipice—Thanksgiving to the Earth—Lotus Rock Temple—Where Pusien washed his Elephant—Wealthy and Inhospitable Temple—Rest at last!—Virgin Forest—Wood-cutters' Path—Charred Images—Magnificent Panorama—Tei Tung Ping—First View of Snow Summits of Thibet—Rhododendron Jungle—Teh Fun!—From Temple to Temple—Flesh and Blood Images—Summit Plateau—Awful Precipice—Thousand Buddhas' Shrine—Fifty Taels a Night—Picnicking on the Mountain—Golden Pavilion Temple.

*July* 28.—Off at six; none too soon, for at seven we already felt the sun oppressive as we toiled up the endless flights of stone steps. We passed the temple of the "Goddess of Mercy," Kwanyin Ko; rounded a fantistic-shaped rock resembling a colossal man, called T'aitze-shih (the "Rock of the Heir Apparent"), passed a poor-looking temple built on a narrow edge, called Kwan-shin-po ("Examine the Heart" declivity), whose priest was most anxious to persuade us to stop and breakfast; then to a larger temple, gaudily decorated and in good repair, with a life-sized tiger (image) in a pen and in a small "joss-house" of its own on the left of the entrance. Propitiating this dreadful being by gifts of incense and the regulation *kotow*, the pilgrims hope to secure themselves and their community from his depredations. We entered the temple for breakfast, it being now a quarter to eight, and found tea and cakes ready spread for our arrival. A plain cake of wheat-flour unleavened,

with a dab of coarse brown sugar in the centre, sopped, native fashion, in hot tea, made a refreshing early breakfast. This luxury was, so the priests told us, brought up from the city of Omi. The *Yuan-pu* was produced, but we refused to put down our names, giving only a few hundred cash as a return for the tea and cakes. This temple is the Si Shin So, or "Rest of the Heart of Fane," and the priests certainly did their best to get us to take a long rest there. But we did not delay, and mounting 815 more steep steps we reached the next temple of Chang Lea Ping (lit. "Venerable Flat"), meaning a level spot utilised for a sacred erection by some reverend monk of long ago. The spot we thought indeed beautifully chosen, as from the stone terrace in front through a screen of fine firs we caught glimpses of the steep valley, up the side of which we had just climbed. All round grew the pine forest, and the shade and freshness were delightful. What better air could we desire? Why not stop here and enjoy the fragrant breeze from the dew-covered sun-bathed fir-trees, reclining meanwhile on the thick carpet of moss and fir needles? Why go on toiling up those interminable steps which seem to lead away from the sunshine and the grassy slopes and up into a forbidding region of rock and mist? So we spoke as we watched the neatly clad pilgrims who stopped to examine us—more surprised than pleased at our appearance. But duty carried the day, and we set out once more; this time up 910 steps (counting them was the only way to be avenged on them), landing us on a narrow ledge, the summit of a sort of promontory jutting out from the main mountain mass, about half-way up. The only break in the ascent was at an outlying rocky point upon which stands, surrounded by the pine forest, the temple known as Tsu Tien, or "First Hall," a poor establishment, although, like Wan Nien Sze and Si Shin Si, it boasts an abbot, and so ranks above the many inferior fanes on the mountain. We had now entered the clouds and just managed to find our way in the thick fog to the gate of the Hua Ten Ting without falling over the edge of the precipice above which it stands.

We were now up 5000 feet, and had said *adieu* to the heat which was not to trouble us again for many days to come. We had, however, got very hot during the climb, and the sharp contrast compelled us quickly to change into warmer garments, and we found the stools round the wide ash-filled hearth, over which the tea-kettle was simmering at one end of the guest-chamber of the temple, a grateful resort. The Hua Yen Ting or "Pinnacle of Contemplation," so named after the treatise on religious contemplation by a priest (Tu-shun) of the Tang dynasty, is the one large Taoist temple on this Buddhist mountain. Taoism of to-day, which is a deformed excrescence of Laotze's teaching, much as was mediæval Catholicism of the teaching of Christ, is hardly distinguishable from Buddhism by a superficial observer, so great have been the borrowings of the older and indigenous native religion from its more modern rival. The dress of the priests is different; the hair is not shorn, but worn long and coiled round the head; but many of the images are almost identical, and the ceremonious ritual is as little dissimilar as is the indisputable moral teaching of the numerous ethical and hortatory treatises common to both sects, without which (*pace* our missionary friends and their spectre of idolatry) no religious body would have a *locus standi* in China any more than in Europe.

After enjoying the hospitality of the customary tea and cakes in the well-furnished guest-room, pending the arrival of our coolies with tiffin, who came in ultimately two hours behind us, we set out on an inspection of the monastery and its surroundings. As usual with these so-called temples, the Hua Yen Ting comprised an extensive range of buildings quite at variance with the idea of a single edifice usually associated with the word and strikingly parallel to the huge monastic establishments of mediæval Europe—places of worship, priests' quarters, acolytes' quarters, guest-rooms for visitors, rich and poor, rooms for wandering priests, of whom there are vast numbers, and each one of whom can by prescribed custom demand three days' board and lodging at every fane, servants'

quarters, cooks' and woodcutters', and places for artisans from a distance, of whom several are almost constantly employed at the more flourishing establishments. The Hua Yen Ting evidently belonged to this category, for new erections were in progress—of wood, cut from the surrounding forests belonging to the temple, and the whole of the buildings boasted roofs of zinc tiles (worth 5*s.* a piece) supported on heavy closely spaced pillars of magnificent cedar. The lower portions of the walls were of brick, all of which has to be carried up the mountain, on stone foundations, and the upper portion of thick pine planking. Fires are very destructive hereabouts, and throughout these mountains we rarely passed a day without seeing traces of the work of the "devouring element." The poorer temples and cottages are either thatched or roofed with shingles. The latter are specially inflammable, and, with the open wood-fires on the earthen floors of the rooms, it can be only owing to the generally damp climate that any of these lightly built "frame" houses survive at all. On stepping outside the walls we found ourselves brought up by a balustrade, on peering over which we discerned nothing but the tops of a few pines, just distinguishable in the thick white mist with which everything was enveloped and which was dripping from the eaves behind us, and realised that we were standing on the brink of a lofty precipice.

Inside a "high mass" was going on. *Sie t'u*, literally "Thanksgiving to the earth," so the priests called the service, which comprised recitations from the sacred books by rows of priests in gorgeous canonicals, accompanied by gongs, cymbals, and drums—a "full choral service"—which went on during the whole of the three hours we spent there, much to our edification, but to the impediment of conversation with the polite priest who was guest-entertainer for the day. We felt quite pained at having to refuse his request to circulate a handsome brand-new *Yuan-pu*, or subscription-book, among our friends when we got back, which he produced and begged us to take away. We even refused to put our own names down, lest

our donation should be magnified *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, for the benefit of future travellers, but gave our modest contribution in copper cash, and, at 2 P.M., set out once more on our upward journey.

A pleasant change greeted us on setting out, in the shape of a few hundred yards of comparatively level road. We were evidently following the edge of one of the narrow *arêtes* peculiar to these mountains, which connected the pinnacle on which the Hua Yen Ting stands with the mountain proper, on reaching which the steep stone staircase immediately recommences. Meanwhile we traversed the paved road, between narrow hedges of wild evergreens, which barely protected us from a fathomless abyss of fog on either side.

This being our first day of real walking we determined to make it a short one, and had given rendezvous to our servants and porters at the Si Siang Chih, or "Wash Elephant Pool," a spacious temple two hours farther on; so we had not hurried ourselves at the Hua Yen Ting. Not long after leaving it we reached the temple called Lien Hun Shih, or "Lotus Rock," a large rambling wooden building, embracing three sides of a wide quadrangle. We were so pleased with the site that we asked the priest to let us look at the guest-rooms, but these, though spacious, were so dilapidated and so dark that we at once abandoned the idea of stopping there. Lien Hua Shih boasts no abbot, but its situation at the junction of two valleys is very fine, and one of the best places we had seen from which to make excursions, as there are undulating paths in various directions, and one has something more than the choice between going up or down a ladder, which is all that many of the wayside stopping-places afford. A path branching off south-east winds through possibly the wildest and most romantic valley on the mountain, with precipitous walls all thickly wooded, and leads to many beautifully situated and very inaccessible looking temples, chief among which is the Chiu Lao T'ung, or "Cave of the Nine Ancients," and Hung Ch'un P'ing, or "Red Banyan Flats." Both possess abbots and are

likely to be desirable places to stay in. This path winds round eventually to Soang Fei Chao, our idyllic halting-place of the "Flying Bridges" six days ago. As we left the Lotus Rock it began to rain, and the priest called out to us to take an umbrella, but, as we were in flannels and had no great distance to go, we trudged on as we were, and shortly before dusk reached our destination, the "Elephant's Pool," where tradition says that Pusien washed his elephant after crossing the mountain from the west. The pool has since been walled in, and is now a still hexagonal fish-pond, about 20 yards in diameter, down whose vertical sides no modern elephant would venture. Behind it, and sheltered by the open forest of pine and oak, stands the temple built to commemorate the fact. It and the pool stand on an out-jutting rocky platform with precipitous sides, such as are affected for temple sites wherever obtainable, known as the Chuan T'ien Po, or "Cloud-piercing Mountain." The temple is spacious, in excellent order, evidently wealthy, and boasts an abbot. "No room" was the unwelcome sound dinned into our ears by a crowd who came out as they saw us emerging from under the trees and ascending the wide flight of stone steps leading to the entrance; however, we had made up our minds to spend the night here, and entered the guest-room almost unasked. Here we were confronted—as we modestly seated ourselves low down in the handsome room—by a very fair-spoken young priest, who told us the temple was full, and that he had positively no room whatever. Had he shown us the civility of offering us tea (which would have been most grateful after our long climb), a proceeding *de rigueur* with every guest according to Chinese etiquette, I should have believed him and gone on at once; but when, in addition to his rudeness, he remarked that he knew foreigners well, having been in Shanghai, it appeared to me that he did not want us there because of the native gentry who were in the temple at the time. So we appealed to some of the elder priests sitting round not to turn us out into the dark and rain, but they put on the stolid *non comprèndo* look of Chinamen who desire to avoid an unpleasant

subject. Our coolies now came up with their loads, and we were loath to have to compel them to resume the ascent at this hour. But there was nothing for it, and feeling ourselves martyrs, tired out as we were, we marched on two miles farther, to the temple of Ta Cheng Sze, or "Great Classic of Discipline (Vinaya)," having come 35 *li* (10 miles), and ascended 4500 feet since the morning, a bagatelle to us a month later, though we then thought it a most creditable achievement. The whole path led up through a thick forest, in the midst of which our temple was built. The pilgrims' room being dark and small, the obliging young priest in charge (the abbot being away) kindly allowed us the large guest-room to ourselves, and we spread our beds on its floor, and, after a hasty supper seated round the open hearth, were soon sound asleep, revelling in the need of thick blankets to keep out the cold.

*July* 29.—Every spot on this unique mountain seems so delightful, and the air so pure and fresh without the rawness of more northern latitudes, that we planned to stay in it at some future time. We decided there and then to spend a day at the temple of the "Vinaya of Discipline." We could see little on account of the fog, but we found that we were on the slope of a steep hill rising behind us, thickly wooded, with a precipice in front screened by the fir trees, through which we gazed on a sea of white fog. We walked along the path we had traversed the day before, which, running a few hundred yards along a ridge before suddenly dropping by a very steep flight to the lower level of the "Elephant's Pool," gave us a comparatively level walk, with forests of firs and magnificent rhododendron trees on either hand. No clearings for cultivation have, at this altitude, destroyed the forest, and we rejoiced in the absence of the tall maize which seemed always to shut us in at Wan Nien Sze. We climbed up a woodcutters' path in rear of the temple, and found men at work felling trees, and cutting up logs for the winter's fuel supply of the temple, and for the rebuilding of the main shrine which had recently been destroyed by fire.

We were made practically aware of the disaster by being led round the charred ruins by the priest and asked to sympathise with the unfortunate condition of the scorched and blistered josses. The rear temple was being solidly rebuilt, a swarm of carpenters rounding off with their adzes the fine cedar logs cut from the neighhouring forest. One colossal Buddha had just been re-gilt. "Give one ting ten taels (£2) and re-gild the 'Goddess of Mercy,'" said the priest, "and she will ensure you male progeny," as he pointed to a dilapidated lump of charred wood and clay temporarily adjusted against the newly built wall; "or present us with an iron roof, such as you foreigners are so clever in making, and immortalise your name on the sacred mountain." We were glad to escape his importunities and climb the steep path behind the temple; it was close upon sunset; the mist disappeared in warm sunshine; a magnificent panorama of rocks and ravines unrolled itself at our feet; steep-wooded peaks rose up out of the sea of fog; below these precipices, mostly covered with thick green jungle; last of all, 6000 feet below, the valley floor with the white thread of the Omi river winding through it. Then suddenly a black cloud rose from behind us (south-west) to the zenith, and a magnificent storm of thunder and lightning filled the sky. As the storm came on we could almost see the contortions of the dragon which Chinese artists depict so grandly in their black and white sketches, until at last a cold rain drove us quickly down the path and into our room where our cook had prepared us a most welcome hot supper. The abbot was still away, and in the evening the priest in charge, a vivacious young man endowed with a most importunate curiosity, gave us more of his company than we desired; he would not be put off without a present of a foreign garment, and I only got rid of him by giving him a merino under-shirt in addition to 2000 cash for our night's lodging. Average of boiling-point readings made the height 7900 feet above sea-level.

*July* 30.—A glorious morning after last night's storm. Started at five o'clock, the sun just gilding the heights above us,

and gently rising plateau covered with long grass, a tangle of wild flowers, and a few scattered trees, with ranges of rather shabby-looking wooden buildings, spread over the high ground on our left, about a mile distant from the Pu Hsien T'a. The view of our long and anxiously expected goal—the summit of the sacred mountain—was decidedly disappointing, the clouds had risen, and there was no view—nothing to show we were on the top of a mountain—and that the most celebrated mountain in China to boot. It had more the aspect of a recent clearing in Canada; the brilliant fire-weed grew thickly scattered amongst the long grass, and the path of pine-planks, the running streams, and the swampy ponds completed the resemblance. We did not then know what we learnt afterwards, that only a year ago the eleven temples on the summit, with all their antiquities and many out-buildings, for the accommodation of the crowds of pilgrims, had, together with the surrounding forest, fallen a prey to the flames. Some were being solidly rebuilt, while the poorer ones had simply erected a temporary shelter out of the ruins, barely sufficing to protect the charred josses from the mountain storms.

We intended making some stay on the summit, and proposed, if possible, to rent a room in the temple occupied by some American missionaries two years before, an outlying temple, away from the crowd of pilgrims on the summit proper, called Chien Fo Ting, or "Pavilion of the Thousand Buddhas." We inquired the way, and were told it was a couple of miles distant along the crest of the mountain southwards. We gazed through the mist in the direction indicated and could see nothing but grass-covered slopes, rising on our left up to the ridge which surmounts the great precipice, on our right jungle and forest just visible through the mist. At length a break in the clouds disclosed what appeared to be a small wooden shanty perched on a hill-top of its own, similar to that upon which stands the group of temples on the summit proper to our left. We at once set out, descending a ravine a few hundred feet down a steep mountain path which brought us to a gap in the mountain,

Summit of Mount Omi, with Temples,

whence, standing on the edge of the great precipice, we looked over into a sea of white fog. The abyss, thus seen for the first time, is so overaweing that we almost hesitated to walk along its unfenced edge. Up another steep path on the opposite side and we stood at the door of the "Thousand Buddhas' Shrine," a two-storied building, comprising a main pavilion and two projecting wings, all rudely constructed of rough pine, pillars and planking hewn without stint from the wealth of the neighbouring forest. The situation was delightful; no other building in sight, and commanding from its front windows, which looked west, an uninterrupted view in fair weather of the Lolo range, the snowy peaks of Thibet, and all the intervening mountains. Its back was set against the edge of the precipice to the east, whence blows the wind the greater part of the year, and up which the mist was now rising rapidly in vast columns of smoke, enveloping the mountain, and from time to time hiding the view of everything over a yard or two distant. We entered the guest-room and interviewed the chief priest, who, after the customary tea and inquiries, took us to a fairly large but very rough room in the south wing, with a window commanding an uninterrupted view over all the surrounding country—a most enviable spot in which to spend a fortnight *en retraite*. We sat down on the bare straw mattress of one of the four rough bedsteads, which comprised the furniture of the room, and commenced to talk business, when we found the old gentleman by no means so agreeable. "If we came to stay here we must bring no flesh food into the temple precincts, as the missionaries who had occupied this room two years before us had done," he said. "Certainly," we replied, "we are abstainers always when the guests of a Buddhist temple"—which was true, for neither of us cared for such meat as we might have had sent up to us from the city of Omi, apart from our not thinking it right to eat meat in a Buddhist temple where it really gave offence. Meantime we were congratulating ourselves on the charms of our coming residence, when, upon our informing the priest that we contemplated remaining ten days or a fortnight, he blandly

replied: "Stay as long as you like; you are *yuen k'o* (guests from afar); but the price will be one *fêng* (fifty taels, equal to £10) whether you stay for a day or a month." This exorbitant charge (it must be remembered that we provided all our own food and paid for each meal of our servants) at almost the beginning of our journey quite took us aback; but we were so pleased with the place and were so tired, and, to tell the truth, so anxious for breakfast and so loath to go back the two miles to the shabby-looking town we had passed on the summit, that we offered him twenty taels for ten days' stay, which we felt sure he must accept. It was all no use, "One *fêng!* One *fêng!* Nothing less!" was all we could get out of the old curmudgeon, and so we had to retreat *re infectâ*. My belief is that previous Westerns had offended him or shocked his pilgrims, and that he had really made up his mind never to receive foreigners in his place again. Our Hankow coolie who was with us (we had left the others with our beds and loads at the summit proper there to wait the result of our negotiations) was most indignant on our behalf, and began to create such a disturbance that I had to put him outside and make him stop there. Ultimately there was nothing else to be done but to retrace our steps in the fog and trust to better luck at the more spacious Chin Ting.

The largest of the temples on the summit as yet rebuilt is the "Golden Pavilion" (Chin Ting)—Ch'ih Ts'ze ("By Imperial Order and Bounty"), as is proudly inscribed on a tablet at the entrance—the Imperial benefactor being the pious Wan Li of Ming fame (A.D. 1573 to 1620). Here, again, the priest began to raise objections, and, as by this time we were starving and foresaw a prolonged colloquy, we cut the discussion short by ordering our coolies there and then to follow us with our things while we led the way to a small grove about half a mile off, where, much to the astonishment of the priests, we proceeded to lay out our tiffin on the rocks, sending a man up to the temple to borrow hot-water for our teapot. The sun pierced through the clouds and we thought we had never enjoyed a more delightful meal. "Here let us lie reclined"

and live on and make an eternal picnic in the pure mountain air, unsullied by Chinese surroundings, we said, and show ourselves independent of priests and innkeepers alike! And, had we had a tent we would have carried out our aspiration. But we had no tent and it came on to rain. The priests now took pity on us and offered us the shelter of the Chin Ting, where, after a long discussion, an agreement was come to with the *tang-chia*, the "business manager," a very agreeable mannered young priest, to rent two rooms for a fortnight for the sum of twenty taels (£4). For this we had a small room for ourselves, a larger one for our "boy" and cook and four coolies; the terms included charcoal for the two braziers (at one of which our cooking was done) and all other amenities of the place. We, on our part, were not to kill any animals or bring up meat from the city of Omi which, together with fowls, the offending missionaries had done two years before and so rendered the temples on the mountain shy of entertaining "foreigners," chiefly, said the priest, from fear of offence being given to the other pilgrims. We were glad to be thus settled at last, although obliged to put up with a room in a dark corner and with no view. It would, indeed, be delightful to have a tent and pitch it where one liked, for the summer climate on Mount Omi is extraordinarily mild—ranging from about a minimum of 50° Fahrenheit by night to a day maximum of 70°—in July; while it is remarkable that this mountain summit, 10,500 feet above sea-level, enjoys the "Lenium ventorum commodissimus flatus" of which Pliny tells us, and the freedom from gales which characterises the province generally. But it would require a stronger party than we were to insist upon camping out at their will, although, when once the lowlands are left behind, the space for pitching tents is unlimited, and one could have one's habitation far out of reach of that Chinese humanity which is, at times, so painfully obtrusive. As it was, we were not sorry to take our supper under a solid roof, and we retired to rest rejoicing that we were now really lodged on the famous mountain top, just three weeks and a day since we set out from the reeking city of Chungking.

# CHAPTER VI

## ON OMI'S SUMMIT

MORNING View—Mountain Sickness—Life in a Monastery—Precious Relics—Beautiful Fragments—Myriad Buddhas' Temple—Magnificent Cloud Effects—Chinese District—Temple Rivalries—Deft Carpenters—Two Table Mountains—Clean Little Temple and Pleasing Priest—Erecting an Abbey—The Suicides' Precipice—Descending to Lei Tung Ping—Lamps of Mercy—Polite Begging—Glory of Buddha—Arrival of a Missionary—Panorama below us—Prognostications of Misfortune.

*July* 31.—Arose before dawn, hoping that the sunrise might be again clear. Ascending to the mountain summit, immediately under which the main building of the Chin Ting, in which we were lodged, is built, we go up a flight of about forty steps which lead to the temple in which is the image of Pusien on his elephant. This upper pavilion crowns the highest point of the mountain; its front towards the west overlooks the main building and faces the sea of mountains which intervene between it and the Thibetan plateau. Its back abuts on the great precipice, from the edge of which it is separated only by a narrow footway, protected by a low breastwork of piled rocks. This pavilion had also vacant rooms in its wings, and as there was, unlike our shut-in dwelling, a grand all-round view, we tried hard, but in vain, to be allowed to move into it. The red streaks of dawn were now commencing to illumine the eastern sky as we gazed over the sea of white cloud which washed up against the face of the cliff a few hundred feet below us. To the west the same sea spread away illimitably into the darkness

of night, the top of the cloud-piercing Omi with its summit temples standing out like a rocky islet in mid-ocean. But soon we turn from the dawn and pass quickly through the temple to the platform at its western door, and there a sight, such as we had never seen before, which will remain photographed upon our brains for ever after, met our enchanted gaze, a row of white peaks, tinted with the faintest shade of rose, stood up out of the billowy clouds like denizens of another world, so lofty and so far off that we could hardly believe they were real. Very gradually the clouds broke up: night's coverlet was slowly withdrawn as day came on, and the black heads of the intervening mountains peered out one after another above it. Meanwhile the snowy peaks which fringe the Thibetan plateau, 80 miles or 100 miles distant, as yet unmeasured, but which may range anywhere from 15,000 feet to 20,000 feet, were growing more and more distinct, while fresh peaks were showing out in the north-west, some bare rosy-tinted rock masses, some black, with snowy peaks scattered here and there amongst them. These were to our extreme right. To our left, on the south-west, arose the precipitous range of the Lolo mountains, whose recesses—known as the "Terrace of the Sun," the home of the independent Lolos—no civilised man has yet ventured to penetrate. Facing thus, with our backs to the precipice, and still looking due west, we are now able to distinguish with our binocular the glaciers descending from the "cols" and continuing the white slopes far down below the snow limit. Behind one white mountain the priest by our side told us lies Ta Chien Lu, the wonder town of the Great West, the frontier city of Thibet, whence the wealth of Central Asia—furs, drugs, rhubarb, and musk—enters the province, by the only break in the magnificent white crenelated wall confronting us, north and south as far as the eye can reach. "Ten long days' journey over impossible paths," said the priest, as we questioned him as to how one could get there. And the snowy peaks looked so near, it was impossible to believe they were nearly 100 miles distant, as the crow flies.

*August* 1.—Boiled the thermometer and made the height just 16,500 feet, as against Baber's 10,800 feet, but boiling in an open pot is, according to Whymper, not reliable. At any rate, this first day, we all, and especially our coolies, felt some *malaise* from the elevation. These latter indeed took to their beds and remained curled up all day. We went for a walk down a rough path at the back of the mountain, through thick undergrowth to a pool, fed by a mountain burn, called Peh Lung Chih or "White Dragon" pool. A small boy accompanied us to point out the dragon. After turning over many stones in the water, he at last produced in triumph a small eft, the saurian, apparently, to which the pool owes its fame. Everything was shrouded in mist and without the boy guide we should hardly have found our way back to our temple. Here, in our small room, lit by a diminutive paper window, we looked out on a wall of damp rock, cut away to make room for the building, and warmed ourselves by the charcoal brazier kindly provided by the priest. Between the chinks in the roughly laid flooring, the fog, which was constantly blowing over the mountain, streamed up and tempered the dry heat from the fire. We passed the evenings reading Carlyle's *Past and Present*, and could not help being struck by the striking analogy between the state of affairs at St. Edmund's Bury in the fourteenth century and that in a Buddhist monastery in China to-day—the same rough simplicity of life; the same dependence on the character of the abbot for the prosperity of the institution; the difference in manners of the individual monks; some, ignorant peasant lads knowing nothing of the world beyond their own immediate surroundings; others, men who had lived in the world as merchants or soldiers, had become disgusted with the outside life, shaved their heads and donned the monastic garb, spending the remainder of their lives in prayer and fasting; some, it is whispered, seeking in the monastery a refuge from crime and hoping to drown remorse in life-long penance. Our monastery seemed a remarkably well-ordered one and has the reputation of being rich. Its abbot, of whom we saw a good deal, was in

the seventies, and he certainly impressed us as being a most holy man. We often saw him before dawn (we rose in the dark nearly every morning of our stay, hoping to catch the snowy mountains again before the inevitable mists swallowed them up) engaged at his solitary devotions before Pusien, at whose feet he would be kneeling in darkness, just visible by the aid of a dim oil lamp. On the other hand, many of the monks of the neighbouring shrine seemed to be little better than opposition hotel touts, each vying with the other to see which could attract more offerings from the pilgrims, of whom one or two hundred daily came and departed. Many of these young priests were most rude and importunate, while at our Chin Ting the utmost order and decorum prevailed. Some of our priests had travelled throughout the eighteen provinces, begging their way from shrine to shrine; nearly all had been to Pootoo, the sacred isle in the Nan Hai (Southern Sea), and so had passed through Shanghai and been, as they called it, to foreign countries, in which category Shanghai and Hongkong take rank in the eyes of the inland Chinese.

*August* 2.—After a night of almost continuous thunder accompanied by torrential rain, we had a day of cold drizzle and did not wander far from the temple doors. We took our morning meal with a young priest, Sung-mow by name, whose special duty it is to entertain guests, and who gave us one of those well-cooked savoury vegetarian meals which, if anything could wean the confirmed beef-eater from the error of his ways, should tend to make a man abjure the savage habit of eating the flesh of innocent murdered victims for ever henceforth. Sung-mow then showed us the precious relics that had survived the fires that have proved so destructive to the antiquities of Omi. Of the great fire of two years ago, which totally destroyed the eleven summit temples, we have already spoken, but the most disastrous fire was that which occurred in the second year of the reign of the Ming Emperor, Cheng Hwa (A.D. 1466), an account of which is given in an inscription on a bronze tablet which now stands on the edge of the great cliff, whence

pilgrims look down on the "Glory of Buddha" in the sea of mist below. This inscription informs us how in the second year of Cheng Hwa the temple was destroyed by fire; how this disaster was reported to the Emperor by the abbot, Liao-chan; how the Emperor thereupon ordered the Viceroy of Szechuan to rebuild it at his (the Emperor's) cost; and how in the tenth year of the reign it was completed—a unique building, from foundation to roof entirely of bronze. Then the inscription goes on to state—in the numerical languages as dear to the Chinese as it was to Pythagoras—that the mountain of Omi is famous throughout the world for its:

Hundred Kan-tze (cornices)—*i.e.*, precipitous ridges.

Twelve big caverns.

Twenty-eight small caves.

Eighty bowls—P'an-tse (enclosed basin-like valleys).

The mountain is one thousand *li* (300 miles) round.

It opposes (*tui*) the Min Mountain. This is a most important function in a mountain: a plain or region that has mountains on one of its boundaries unopposed by any ridge or elevation in the opposite quarter, is open to all sorts of evil influences, which its ill-favoured inhabitants can but partially ward off by such palliatives as brick screens before their entrances, doorways built askew, or engraved stones from the sacred Taishan, the holy mountain of Shantung. We see the truth of this in the calamitous inundations of the Yellow River country, a notoriously unscreened region, and in the destructive tornadoes in the unprotected provinces on the south-west coast. The inscription finishes—"The temple is now restored better than ever before: the celebrity of the mountain is established for all time."

Alas! in the twenty-second year of Kia Tsing (A.D. 1544) the bronze temple was burnt. How this could have occurred is a mystery. Probably it was enclosed in a wooden structure to protect it from the weather, as has been done with the bronze image of Pusien on his elephant at Wan Nien Sze. At any rate, nothing is left now but fragments which have been piled

The Chief Priest of the Golden Temple, and Fragments of Bronze Temple, on Mount Omi (destroyed in A.D. 1544).

up against the rocks at the back of the Chin Ting. These astonished us by their massiveness and exquisitive workmanship —well shown in the photographs we succeeded in obtaining of a few pieces. Like all Chinese architecture, this temple, although constructed entirely of bronze, was modelled from the usual wooden building; panels fitted into a mortised framework. These panels are the size and shape of the ordinary folding doors that in winter protect the south or courtyard side of the K'o-tang, or Guest-hall of a Chinese House; the lower panels are decorated with sprays of hawthorn, roses, peach-blossoms, etc., cast in relief and touched up with the chisel to delicate minuteness; the upper panels simulate the mortised tracery upon which the paper substitute for glass is usually pasted. Other panels were covered entirely with embossed "Buddhas." The bronze tiles are of the same shape and size as the ordinary rounded clay tile, and at the corners of the roof open-mouthed dragons take the place of gargoyles. The castings were made in Cheng Tu (the provincial capital), and it is a marvel how they were dragged up the mountain. Many of the fragments, I should judge, weighed half a ton. Although over four hundred years old, the pieces looked smooth and bright and the carvings as accurately defined as though made yesterday. Another notable monument is a small bronze pagoda, said to be 1000 years old. (T'ang dynasty, A.D. 618–923.) This too was cast in Cheng Tu, and apparently all in one piece; it is covered with Buddhas in relief, sitting each on his lotus; a portion of one side is shining brass, made so by the devotion of pilgrims, who seldom fail, notably the women, to polish a cash on its surface and so become the happy possessors of an infallible charm. Similar defacement of the elephant's trunk has led to the erection of a heavy stone palisading as a protection from too importunate worshippers.

*August* 3.—Another day of cloud and drizzle; thermometer 49° in the morning, rising to 65° in the afternoon, when, for a brief interval, the sun half pierced the volumes of mist which appeared to surge up from the steaming plain below and roll

over the edge of the cliff and so westwards across the back of the mountain, shutting out everything at over 10 yards interval. Yet how we rejoice in the cool fresh atmosphere, and how we pitied our friends left behind sweltering in the Chungking sun. Here we were in our native clime; just such weather as reminded us of a wet summer in England. We started out, and walked down and then up the steep path that follows the edge of the great precipice southwards to the Chien Fo Ting (the "Thousand Buddhas' Pavilion"), at which we met with scant politeness on the occasion of our first visit. From the pinnacle upon which this isolated, wildly situated temple stands, a more distant peak is visible upon which stands another similarly situated temple, known as the Wan Fo Ting, or "Myriad Buddhas' Temple." This is a comparatively recent erection, and it would almost look as though an ambitious priest had built it to compete for pilgrims' favour with the "Thousand Buddhas." This latter is quite a modern institution and the number of its worshippers is limited. For when the poor pilgrims have toiled up to the summit from Omi city, 120 *li* in distance and 10,000 feet in height, in a single day, as most of them do, they must be energetic and devout indeed who, having once worshipped on the summit proper, would cross another steep valley and on the same day make the further ascent to the "Thousand Buddhas." Yet this cross has been laid upon them, and all who can feel it their duty to take it up. Now, as if this were not enough, a priest has given the means to additional merit by building his shrine of the "Myriad Buddhas" on the summit of a third and far distant peak. We determined to walk on thither, but although our toil that day had been practically *nil*, we found it to be a troublesome climb, and but for the encouragement afforded us by two pilgrims who preceded us and showed us the way through the steep jungle path, we should hardly have persevered as we did. The jungle consisted chiefly of loquat, rhododendron, arbutus, and dwarf bamboo, with many thistles and briars. A path had been cut through it up the steep hill, but was being rapidly overgrown, the

temple, as we found on reaching it, being closed and unoccupied.

*August* 4.—Thick clouds all day. Took a photograph of the abbot, and waited in vain with the camera for a rift in the clouds to enable us to take a view of the peak on which stands the "Thousand Buddhas." Consulted with priests as to moving to a more cheerful spot; thought we would try the Chiu Lau T'ung ("Cave of the Nine Worthies"), in the beautiful side valley, the entrance to which we had passed coming up at Lien Hwa Shih. Our priest told us that we should be well treated at this temple which was under our abbot, and so a properly conducted establishment. There we should be below the clouds and in a milder climate, at 6000 feet elevation only. In the afternoon the sun came out for a few minutes; the clouds descended to about 200 feet below our summit, which stood out like an island in an Arctic sea, piled up clouds in the distance simulating gigantic icebergs. But the mist quickly rose again and drove us back shivering to our dimly lighted room and its charcoal fire.

*August* 5.—Torrential rain all night and Scotch mist all day, till at 4 P.M. the island we were on slowly rose out of the sea for 1000 feet or more, and disclosed the most magnificent cloud effects we had yet witnessed. The setting sun illuminated with a pink tinge the curling billows to the west, and cast a perfect shadow of the mountain on the white table-cloth which shrouded the Kiating plain and the Yangtze valley in the east. We descended 1000 steps to the "Gate of Heaven" and thence on to the Pusien Ta (Pusien's Dagoba), in which is enthroned the heavily gilded corpse of its former octogenarian abbot. The fortunate glimpse of sunshine gave us enough light in the dark recesses of the temple to secure a good picture of this venerable curio. And we noted the contrast between the man-made figure of the canonised hero behind with its absolutely stolid haughty air, and the patient, mild, Vicar of Wakefield-like face of the God-made saint below, the little droop of the upper lip where a tooth had accidentally fallen

out, and the other ravages of time, together with the little touching indication to a holy life led in trust upon One higher. Then we turned "home," less discontented with Omi's summit than we had been yesterday, after four days and nights of constant rain.

The Wan Fo Sze, or "Myriad Buddhas' Temple," had exercised the ingenuity of some distich writer, whose antithetical couplet adorning the two portals we thought worth transcribing. Each line of the couplet commences with one of the two words forming the title of the shrine—"Myriad" and "Buddha"—the two lines form a perfect parallel and the meaning is deep, not to say recondite; here they are:

*Wan sze, wu sze, ho you sze?*
*Fo fah, you fah, yi wu fah.*

which I would venture to render:

Why toil in endless business? All business is but nil.
What need ye Buddha's myriad laws, if ye his law fulfil?

recalling to mind Lao-tse's—"The more laws, the worse the people" (that have the need of them). Chinese philosophers have reflected deeply on these matters, and influenced the thoughts and conduct of their countrymen to a far-reaching extent, affecting the daily life of the Chinamen as persistently as (imperceptibly or openly) do Christian ethics the lives of us Westerns.

*August* 6.—The disastrous fire of 1890 originated in the large establishment (now rebuilding) immediately south of our Chin Ting, known as the Kai Shan Tsu Tien, or "Opening the Mountain Original Palace." An inscription states that when, in the Eastern Han period (A.D. 25–87), the mountain was first opened up, and Pusien's retreat discovered, this was the temple built. It possesses an image of Pusien on his elephant in bronze, which its priests claim to be older than the more celebrated monument at Wan Nien Sze. But this statement may be only one of many devised to attract. It also has its separate summit pavilion (including a special view of the "Lamps of Mercy," as the will-o'-the-wisps, often seen at night in the Kiating plain

below, are called), and on the door I noticed a placard: "Come and burn incense here; this is the true original Pusien." This business jealousy between the rival temples has been farther sharpened by the Chin Ting having accused the Tsu Tien of causing the fire, and a law-suit is still in progress at the capital to decide the question. These two, as well as the other summit temples, are further quarrelling about the timber from the adjoining forests which are being ransacked for the numerous huge pillars of wood needed in their reconstruction. Gangs of carpenters from the city of Hung Ya, 50 miles away on the northern foot of the mountain, were quartered in big outbuildings erected for their accommodation, receiving their food from the priests, and wages of about threepence a day in addition. They were good workmen, and toiled hard from dawn to dusk, as is the Chinese custom, with apparently no superintendence. We were never tired of watching the deft way in which they were chiselling the elegant mortised lattice work and carvings for windows and panels, each workman, apparently, working original designs out of his head without any patterns; but really from memory. The same wages seemed to rule for all, skilled and unskilled—if, indeed, there were any of the latter. Many of the priests were aiding in the work, especially the decorative portions.

A beautiful starlight night was followed by a clear sunrise, and for the second time we enjoyed the sublime prospect of the panorama of snowy mountains which encircle Omi like a guard, on the north and west. The intervening ranges were wonderfully distinct, their precipitous walls, which all seem to face this way, standing out distinct in the light of the eastern sun. Two extraordinary mountains in the middle distance particularly arrested our attention, of about the same height as Omi, they were remarkable for their flat summits and wall sides; both were called Wa Shan, meaning roof, or house mountain, and both were said to be sacred and to be adorned with temples. The one to our right bore west by north and lay in the direction of Hung Ya; was four days distant by a practicable path, but

one on which no food was obtainable; that to the left bore south-west by west, and could only be reached by returning to the city of Omi and there taking a road which led round the eastern and southern faces of Omi itself. As we had no desire to venture again into the hot plain and traverse the notoriously unhealthy valleys that lead round the foot of Omi's stupendous cliffs (where Hosie and his party sickened with fever eight years before), we inquired whether it was not possible to walk there direct, going down the back of the mountain. Impossible! To go down the western slope you would have to traverse the Laolin or wilderness, which is impassable; so we abandoned the idea and spent the rest of the morning in trying to find out which of these two strange mountains was the real Wa Shan, and which was the better worth visiting. Meanwhile at 6.30 the scene faded away, and no more mountains, except our own little knoll, were seen that day; but the two hours that had passed were worth the whole trouble of the journey from Chungking and back.

In the afternoon, when the chilly fog without drove us back to our brazier, and Sung-mow came in for his usual chat, we discussed with him the practicability of our going on to Ta Chien Lu, for we had been fired with the ambition to reach it as soon as we first caught sight of its protecting snowy mountain. Impossible again: four days of terribly hot valleys and then seven of precipitous mountain; five passes, some higher than Omi; and, final crusher, no food obtainable on the way; so this project was dismissed almost as soon as formed.

*August 7.*—Another fine sunrise; one more unrolling of the glorious panorama which, we believe, for variety has not its equal in the world, and again the mists closed in upon us. We went in and wrote our home mail, sending afterwards one of our coolies in to Kiating (three days' journey) with the letters, there to be handed over to the native post for delivery to our representatives in Chungking. In the afternoon we took a walk in the fog along a woodcutters' path, leading southwards past the foot of the pinnacle on which stands the "Thousand

Buddhas' Temple." Here a little used and secluded path brought us to a small clearing, in which was a potato-patch and a modest one-storied temple, indistinguishable in appearance from a neat farm-house, the Ming Yueh Ngan, or "Full Moon Monastery." There appeared to be no one there, but the door was ajar, and we walked in; a neat altar, with the usual curtained shrine of Amita Buddha, occupied the main hall, with sleeping-rooms and kitchen on either side. We were struck by the scrupulous cleanliness of the place, small and poor though it was. While we were thus looking about, and thinking that this would be an ideal cottage in which to rusticate during the hot months, the proprietor, a young, lively, and pleasant-looking priest, returned. He had a sack of millet across his shoulders, which he had that day brought up for his sustenance from Omi city, 120 *li* (40 miles) distant. After some conversation, we found that he had visited both the Wa Shan, and from him we now at last acquired an intelligible description of these two famous "roof" mountains: the one to our right, in the district of Hungya, was the true Wa Shan, and covered with temples—now, however, much neglected, many deserted, and in ruins. That to our left, though called also Wa Shan, its square shape, is properly the Sai King Shan, or "Dry Classics Mountain," for did not Pusien, after his arduous journey across the then pathless mountains from India, here spread out the sacred books which he brought with him on his elephant, and which had got damaged in his long tramp by the rain and snow, to dry? As to our going there direct by the by-paths through the wilderness, this was possible to mountaineers like himself, but he doubted if we could manage it. We must have a good guide, be prepared to walk six days, 90 *li* a day, carry our food with us, and not mind getting wet through, both above (from the rain and the wet jungle through which we should have to force our way) and below (from the streams we should have to ford). On the other hand, to go round by Omi city, whence he had come that day, we should have to traverse the heated valleys at the foot of

the mountain and expose ourselves to the cholera, of which thousands were dying daily. We took leave of the young priest, thanking him for his information, and determined at once to make arrangements for a start through the wilderness.

*August* 8.—Another fine dawn; a sea of white fleecy clouds hiding all the broken country to the east, out of which the sun rose, again lighting up for our intense enjoyment the magnificent ranges of mountains stretching away to the snowy guardians of the great Thibetan plateau beyond. Our early coffee was not yet ready when the driving mist rolling up the cliff drove us back to our room. We had another day of cloud and drizzle, with grand storms of lightning and thunder below us. We strolled about in the neighbourhood, watching the active building operations going on around us. To the extreme left of the small summit plateau is the spot where, before the fire, stood the Wu Yun Ngam, or "Reclining on the Clouds Abbey," the southernmost of the seven summit temples. Here the framework of the new building had been in active progress all the time of our stay. Massive pillars were mortised together as they lay on the ground in *situ*, the circular stones which serve as foundations, and to raise the wooden pillars of Chinese buildings off the ground and out of the damp, were all ready in position at the foot of the pillars as these lay on the ground ready for erection. The heavy, squared timber joists, which connect each row of pillars and upon which the roof proper is subsequently built up, had all been fitted in, each division of the external walls being thus complete in its framework, and only wanting the ring of exterior connecting beams for the building to be finally complete—all but the ultimate filling in of light brick or lath and plaster which furnish the walls, internal and external, of cottage and palace alike throughout the length and breadth of the Empire. The sole erection so far was a wooden tower right in the centre, which we at first took to be a novel and decidedly striking architectural feature in Chinese buildings. Upon nearing the spot and watching the animated ant-like commotion going on among the

hundreds of assembled priests and workmen, it became evident that no ordinary work was under way. What had seemed to us the extremely leisurely progress of the preceding weeks was now shown to have been the steady methodical preparation for to-day's culminating stroke. Like the launching of a great ship, gradually built up on the stocks, the Wo Yun Ngan had been slowly progressing towards completion, almost imperceptibly and unnoticed. The tower, as its four floors became crowded with men, in long blue gowns, turned out to be a huge four-storied windlass; and now, as the capstan bars were inserted in the central pillar, the ropes, attaching it to the framing lying on the ground on each side, began to taughten up; and, as they did so, crowds of men drove wedges under the further ends of the framings themselves which lay on the ground; with a great shout, which greeted the first signs of motion in the cumbrous heap of woodwork, the men redoubled their exertions until they at last got the frames raised sufficiently to enable beams of wood, smartly pushed under, to take the place of the wedges. Then a short rest and a smoke, after which all went to work again in the same way and another few inches were gained. So it went on all day, the work becoming easier, of course, as the angle between the framings and the windlass diminished. By evening the whole was up, and there, where in the morning was nothing but a plot of long grass and weeds with what looked like a lot of smoothed logs scattered through it, suddenly arose the great temple of Wo Yun Ngan, with nothing wanting but its tiled roof and the filling in of the walls. The arrangement of the work so that the strain on the windlass is balanced by coming on two sides simultaneously, struck us as highly practical: all danger of straining the shaft or breaking it, as occurs at times in heaving up an anchor on board ship, being in this manner avoided.

*August* 9.—All night incessant thunder, lightning, and heavy rain. It held up for awhile, however, in the early morn, and we at once stepped up to the summit behind our residence. The great precipice stood out clear for once, and we were

enabled, looking over the perilous brink, to form some idea of its height and extent. The few yards at the edge, along which runs a narrow path at the back of the temples, the so-called Suicides' Cliff, are railed in with iron posts and chains. This portion of the precipice seems really to overhang, and the view from it descends sheer into the Kiating "plain," 9000 feet below. For some miles to the right, and for a mile or more to the left, one walks through the long grass and wild-flowers that grow right up to the brink, entirely unprotected, and one has to get used to the place before daring to crane one's neck over the edge. Then we see that the sheer fall varies from 3000 to 5000 feet below, which are inaccessible rugged slopes, and then again more cliffs. On one of these ledges is pointed out the remains of a Taoist hermit who perished there. Looking through the telescope we could indeed distinguish what looked like a bundle of old clothes, as also the staff of the holy man, and, judging by what we had seen of ascetic enthusiasts in other spots, living in almost inaccessible niches, and dependent on food let down to them by the charitable or handed up from below, we can well believe the tale. Some of these living skeletons will exist for a year on hard cold rice, less than would keep an ordinary man alive for a month. The Chinese are not all apathetic materialists. After this stroll on the top we determined to go for a long walk, which, of course, we can only do in one direction—viz., down (much as a man who should once reach the North Pole could only go south), and as the long grass was soaked we chose the only practicable path, the one by which we had come up! This we descended as far as Lei Tung Ping (Thunder Cave Flat), 1300 feet below, the fog now entirely shutting out what otherwise should have been a series of magnificent views. We tiffined *en route* in the rain, preferring the fresh air to the ruinous temple, in which, however, we afterwards drank tea and smoked a pipe to gratify the old priest and afford an opportunity of presenting him with the welcome string of cash, which he seemed sorely to need. Thunder Cave Temple is situated in a gap on the crest of a ridge which falls

away on both sides in magnificent precipices, a glimpse of which was barely seen at intervals as we sat on, waiting for the mists to allow us to photograph. The weather cleared sufficiently in the afternoon to enable us to take a view of the building itself, with the priest sitting on the steps in the court-yard, but nothing beyond. As for the building, it is of unpainted pine-wood, it is two-storeyed, has a roof of thatch, and surrounds three sides of a court-yard of about 50 feet square, the fourth side being formed by the terrace and the flight of stone steps leading up to it. The arrangement is the same as in all, the main building containing the principal images and shrines, and the two wings the dwellings of the priests and the needful offices. The painting and gilding of the shrines were old and worn, and the whole had a decayed appearance, very different from the air of smartness which strikes one in the wealthy temples of the summit. I fear the Buddha of Thunder Cave is not reputed *ling* (efficacious), and so misses the golden, or rather copper, shower of offerings that go to enrich other more popular shrines, while the pilgrims pass this over. From Lei Tung Ping up to Tai Tze Ping is an ascent of 1000 feet, up 3000 steep stone steps. As A. was suffering much from difficulty of breathing owing to the elevation, we bargained with a coolie to carry her up in his *peitze* (a basket of bamboo carried on the back and attached by straps of bamboo passing round the shoulders in front, a pleasing substitute for the carrying pole of the plains), for 200 cash. Thence 1800 steps more took us to the summit. On our way up we stopped at the Chen Hiang Ta, or "Tower of Fragrant Fossil-wood," whence a winding path through the fir trees leads to a projecting natural platform of rock overhanging the cliff. On arriving at this elevated perch, we found nearly all the available standing space occupied by a party of pilgrims, men and women, about half a dozen, squatted on the rock awaiting patiently the coming of the "Glory of Buddha," which can be seen from this spot. One man was lying down smoking his opium pipe, soothing his nerves so as

to enable him to gaze down over the edge of the abyss without shuddering. But the clouds were inexorable, so we trudged up the remaining 1300 steps, passing through the "Celestial Gate" and refusing many pressing invitations to stop and *shwa* at the various temples *en route*. To-night after supper, we were summoned to walk up to the summit and look over the edge of the cliff. The clouds had sunk, the stars shone clear in the sky overhead, while, some hundreds of feet below, the white surface of the clouds spread out in the distance as far as the eye could reach. Dotted amongst the clouds, almost as thickly as the stars above, were what looked like shining lamps of extraordinary brilliancy; these were Kwan Yin Têng, or "Lamps of Mercy," as the Chinese call them; otherwise the lamps of Kiating city coming up to Omi to be lit. It was a striking spectacle both from the extent and from the persistency of the lights; they might have been the camp-fires of a huge army bivouacking on the mountain side, suggesting the army of Christian envoys, now over-running Szechuan, besieging Buddhism in its last stronghold. I never should have imagined that will-o'-the-wisps, if such they be, could have shone forth with such striking brilliance. We gazed long until at last the cold drove us in. I have since regretted that we did not wait and time the duration of the phenomenon, which is probably electric. We came in and arranged for two of our coolies to start at daybreak for Omi Hsien to notify the magistrate of our intended departure and to buy some warm clothing for our followers, whose dread of penetrating farther into the mountains we had to do all we could to mitigate.

*August* 10.—Another night of lightning, thunder, and pouring rain; in the morning the trench excavated round our temple for drainage was overflowing, and the paths down the hill were converted into good-sized rivulets. We packed up the things we purposed carrying with us on our tramp and despatched the remainder down to Wan Nien Sze, there to await our return. We went for a walk in the rain and concluded we had

had enough of Omi, although we were grateful to the sacred mountain for the benefit which our stay on its summit had been to our health on arrival. We were both, what in China is called somewhat "run down," and we had now picked up our strength and were, thanks to Omi, fit for a walking tour, such as we should have regarded as an absurdity a couple of weeks before. We came back to dine with the venerable abbot in the guest-room decorated for the occasion, but which, having been shut up for some time before, chilled us to the marrow of the bones, while the thick mist from outside came rolling in and made us anxious for the tedious preliminaries which precede a Chinese feast to come to an end and the serious business of attacking the warm food to begin. We knew, too, that the dinner was a prelude to another attack on our generosity, but when the meal was over we stuck firm to our promised twenty taels, to which we duly set our names in the *Yuan-pu*, engaging to give more next year if our business at Chungking should prosper. We were hard pressed to provide a corrugated iron roof, such as our friend Sung-mow had seen in his travels in foreign parts (Shanghai), and so save the temple from the danger of its present shingle roof, and at the same time hand our names down to posterity as benefactors of the most holy spot between the Four Seas. Here is an opportunity for some of our readers! Shortly before sunset the weather cleared and we were told the "Glory of Buddha"—the grand phenomenon of the sacred mountain—would be visible. We hurried up to the top of the cliff and looked over. Below was a sea of cloud; at our backs the sun, now shortly about to sink in the west, was brightly shining. Sure enough, there was a circular halo reposing on the cloud surface, its bottom just cut off by the shadow of the mountain's edge, so that the rainbow (for such it apparently is, having all its colours) shorn of a portion of its circumference, appeared of a horse-shoe shape, and in its centre was the greatly magnified shadow of the observer's head. The fortunate pilgrims who had made the ascent to-day were in ecstacies at their good fortune and

awe-struck at the divine manifestation; they threw themselves prostrate and prayed in silence—a word spoken being supposed to drive away the manifestation. They fail to perceive that the Buddha is their own shadow, although we proved the fact by waving our arms, when the shadow responded, each spectator, as with the rainbow proper, being the centre of his own halo. It was a striking spectacle, more from the fervour of the worshippers than from the phenomenon itself. Even the flippant young priest who dispensed pardons at 40 *cash* apiece in the upper pavilion of the Chin Ting, was, for the first time we had so seen him, awed into a reverend demeanour. As the sun sank and the shadow of the mountain prolonged itself athwart the white table-cloth spread out at our feet, the phenomenon subsided and the crowd melted away silently to their various lodging-places in the surrounding temples; we ourselves well satisfied that our ten days' expectancy had been rewarded by the sight of this, the crowning glory of the famous mountain. I must add that my wife, who was never tired of hanging over the great precipice, saw this spectacle many times, and each day she said with greater admiration. A "Litany!" chanted by a full chorus of priests, closed a not uneventful day.

*August* 11.—Another day of heavy rain. One of the China Inland missionaries from Kiating arrived at the Chin Ting to claim the hospitality of the priests for a couple of days; he reported the heat and closeness down below, under the cloud-curtain, almost insupportable and the cholera still raging terribly; 30,000 persons had already died at Cheng Tu, among the dead being two English missionaries. He was provided with books, printed at the expense of well-meaning philanthropists at home, pointing out to the unfortunate heathen the errors of their ways. It is always a matter of astonishment to me to see how politely the Chinese receive these kind attentions. Fancy a Buddhist priest "itinerating" through eastern Europe (let us say) and putting up at a monastery of the Greek or Roman church, and there pointing out to the misguided inhabitants the

to dissuade us at the last moment from carrying out our project. If we were really determined to go, our only plan was to retrace our steps to the city of Omi and there take the main road round the foot of the mountain; this would only take us two days longer, even if we did our 90 *li* a day through the wilderness, but we should never do this—indeed, we should never get through at all; there was only the tracing of a seldom used path, and this, after leaving the pine forest, was cut for miles through a bamboo jungle. The sharp stems of the bamboo, cut to spear-like points, would impale us if we fell, as we were bound to do on the steep ground, made additionally slippery by the continuous rains; the streams would not be formidable; there were no inhabitants; and if we failed to do our 90 *li* by nightfall we should have to camp on the wet ground and be eaten up by the wild beasts. They seemed fully as grieved as were undoubtedly our coolies when they found it impossible to make us change our minds.

# CHAPTER VII

## THROUGH THE WILDERNESS AND BY THE TUNG RIVER

EARLY start—Down 3000 feet—Through the Wilderness—Romantic Goddess of Mercy River—At the Thieves' Rest—Green Snake—Wild Boars—Strings of Salt Porters—Exhausted by Heat—Thanks to a Taoist Mine—Ta Wei—Plucky Pony!—Extraordinary Steepness—Wild Mountain Inn—Once more the Tung River—Home of the Independent Lolo—Golden Gate Village—Coming from the Play—Almost Impossible Inn—Rapid Rise and Fall of Rivers.

*August* 13.—We were favoured with a fine morning for our start which we managed to effect by half-past six, the loads having been weighed and apportioned, seventy-five pounds to each man, of whom we had eight, carrying our bedding, food, cash, and spare clothing, as well as rice for themselves. Our Hankow "boy" and coolie, the latter acting as cook, followed empty-handed, while the two *tingchai* brought up the rear with the camera and its stand. One of our coolies, an old soldier who had fought in the Lolo country, had armed himself with a sword, and I yielded to their earnest solicitations and inspired confidence by strapping my revolver round my waist. We thus set out, fourteen of us in single file, down the wood-cutters' path which we had already traversed as far as the "White Dragon's" pool a few days before. From here on we entered *Laolin*, the first virgin forest we had traversed in China. Stumbling over fallen trees, down rocky beds of mountain streams, the invisible trail led on. Everything was dripping with moisture; it became warmer as we rapidly descended; there was not a breath of air, and the thermometer

stood at 80°. We got wet through from within and without—besides from above and below as the priests had told us. In many places the spongy moss was a foot thick, and a thin mossy growth covered the sloping rocks and made them as slippery as ice; our porters had many falls, and cursed the Ming Yueh Ngan priest who had led us to choose this road. After three hours of really hard work we came to the belt of wild bamboo through which a narrow trail had indeed been cut, but not wide enough to obviate our having to push the stems aside at every step, the overarching branches deluging us with showers of water. The path here, though going up and down, turned southwards on a gentle incline, to contrast with our previous almost vertical descent. We longed for the open as ardently as Stanley in Darkest Africa, and kept on asking our guide: How many *li* more? At last the growth became thinner, we got a sight of the sky and the wide valley into which we were descending. This was covered with jungle, uncultivated and uninhabited. At length we reached an isolated cottage called Ming Seng Chang, or the "Bright Enclosure," so called from its being the site of some ancient ironworks from which came the iron tiles with which some of the temples on Omi are still roofed; but mining has long ago been prohibited on the slopes of the sacred mountain, and such metal tiles as the temples can still afford are made of zinc from Chêng Tu. Here the tiffin was quickly spread, our coolies by this time being adepts in taking possession of a cottage, sweeping it out, rubbing down the one table, and upon it spreading our white table-cloth, while the owners stand round helpless in open-mouthed astonishment. Meanwhile the cook has got his charcoal *fênglu* (furnace) under way, we boiled our thermometer, which the peasants are always much disappointed that we do not afterwards eat, and sat down to a most enjoyable repast; but we dared not linger as we had yet 50 *li* to make good before nightfall. We found we had descended just 3000 feet. It was a most brilliant day, and we were all in high spirits at having

successfully traversed the first stage of the terrible *Laolin*. Omi's summit towered above us with a white cloud cap on its head, but all around the sky was radiant blue, such as we had not seen it for two months past. An exquisitely fresh air swept up the valley, uncontaminated with paddy-fields or human habitations, tempering the warm but pleasant sunshine. Here, we said, we have at last found the ideal spot for a summer outing. We trudged on down the valley by a narrow path, following the course of a small burn which became a fair-sized river on the morrow, sometimes wading across it, at others climbing high up its side to avoid a precipitious gorge where the water was too swift and deep for wading. We passed a few isolated cottages, where the jungle was being burnt for the manufacture of soda or potash (*chien*), but otherwise met no one. After a few miles the valley narrowed to a gorge about 5 feet in width, through which the stream now swollen into a torrent, forced its way between two magnificent lime-stone walls. Just above the gorge, at a spot called Hei Tao Pa ("Walnut Tree Bank"), we had to cross a wide ford, which delayed us some time, the laden coolies helping each other with their loads. Taking off our foot gear to keep it dry we waded across, stumbling amongst the rough boulders in the rapid water. Hence we ascended an almost perpendicular path some 500 feet up, and then came rapidly down through an ever-widening valley, with steep limestone cliffs on either side, to a point where an affluent from the west (our course was south) came in, the united stream from this spot being known as the Kuan Yin Ho, or "Goddess of Mercy River." This affluent came down through a most beautiful and romantic valley which we longed to explore: lofty cloud-capped mountains, wild and grand-looking, bordered the valley which led, we were told, to the home of the wild cattle (*ngai niu*, lit. precipice ox), for which these mountains are famous: they also are inhabited by tigers, white bears, wolves, foxes, monkeys, and musk-deer. An iron suspension bridge here crosses the torrent, guarded by a small temple dedicated to Kuan Yin; this, to our regret, for we were

tired out and had hoped for a cup of tea, was untenanted, and it was already past four. We now ascended again and, after a few miles, came to another gorge along the east side of which a narrow slippery path, cut out of the solid rock some 500 feet above the torrent, led us once more into cultivated country and civilisation. The path now became a good one of the Chinese kind, and skirting several delightfully situated hamlets embosomed in *hoangko*, walnut, acacia, and bamboo, we reached the village of Lei Shih Kou ("Thunder Rock Mouth"—*i.e.*, entrance), just as it was getting too dark to see our way. Our destination was properly the small town of Lung Ch'ih ("Dragon Pool"), three miles further, but even if we could have found our way over the intervening pass in the dark, we were only too glad to rest outside a town rather than in one. Our "boy," of course, declared against the possibility of risking our lives in such a thieves' den (as reads the Chinese nick-name), and actually went on with one porter expecting us to follow. But we were tired out, and the landlord of the village inn addressed his prayers that we should put up with him to only too willing ears. Our coolies were only too glad to set down their burdens anywhere, but our Hankow cook, who had stayed with us, implored us to go on and not allow ourselves to be lured into the thieves' rest, as he called the inn. We had our own way, however, and heartily we enjoyed a rub down and change of clothing, and the subsequent supper spread on a table in the court-yard under the stars and by the flicker of a Chinese candle. It was a most balmy night and we slept the sleep of the blessed.

*August* 14.—We had yielded to the entreaties of our servants the night before and had fired off our revolver to warn the robbers, but this usually most effective precaution had not sufficed in their eyes. According to their own account they had not gone to bed but sat up all night expecting robbers, who, it appears, had actually attacked a neighbouring farm, and, as we had a good deal of treasure with us for the expenses of the journey, they had fully made up their minds that we were to be attacked also. There are bandits in these mountains

who rob the outlying farms; but, as a rule, they are very careful not to commit any personal violence, as this would lead to their pursuit by the authorities, which is the last thing they want. Of course, after sitting up all night our coolies were too tired to go on that day, and as the spot was a most entrancingly beautiful one, and it was the Sabbath to boot, we readily fell in with their views, and we did spend a delightful day. The weather was perfect. In the morning we walked up a glen, not a hundred yards from our domicile, where the gorge cut by a small stream was filled with forest trees, with a grassy glade under an overhanging limestone cliff for us to recline on, listen to the birds, and watch the sunshine through the trees. In the afternoon we descended a precipitous path which fell away from the little plateau on which the village stood, 300 feet or 400 feet to the river's brink, the opposite bank being a sheer precipice 1000 feet high. At a height of about 20 feet from the level of the river was a cavern with a wide semicircular mouth, out of which flowed an underground river as large in volume as the stream which it went to swell. Below this we looked down into an open level, walled in by high mountains pierced in three directions by large valleys, of which that which we had just come down formed one; one stream coming from the east goes to form the lake of Lung Ch'ih, upon the banks of which the town of that name is built; the two other streams unite, and form a decent sized river, just below it. The valley proper of Lung Ch'ih is almost level, being filled up with the *débris* from its surrounding mountains; through this the rivers have cut out sinuous channels, about 100 feet below the level of the valley floor, their banks as steep as the formation of the ground (rock detritus) will permit of; to the eye these seem almost perpendicular. The soil is rich in these valley-bottoms, and here bore magnificent crops of maize and millet, besides fine groves of fruit trees—persimmons, loquats, and oranges; but we missed the wild strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, with which we had so often beguiled the steep

climbs on Omi's slopes. We settled our bill in the evening, paying 1000 cash for our accommodation, which, judging by his profuse *kotows*, our landlord appeared to consider a most munificent return. We passed a quiet night, enjoying the bright warm air and contrasting it with the continuous mists and rains of our fortnight on the summit. We were just 3500 feet above the sea, and the climate seemed perfection—warm yet not relaxing. Our coolies killed a snake of a vivid grass green colour that came out from under a rock near which we had been sitting and which they said was dangerous. In the evening, as we sat on a cliff overlooking the river, we heard the wild boars in the maize fields squeaking with joy; it was a beautiful calm starlit night, the air was balmy and full of glow-worms, and it was late before we could make up our minds to walk back to the inn, a coolie lighting us over the rocky path with a lantern.

*August* 15.—Started in the rain, at first up a steep ascent which led over a low but steep pass, upon reaching the summit of which we gazed on the town of Lung Ch'ih, 500 feet below. The "Dragon Pool" is a small sheet of water, about two by three miles, and at its western end is built the town, most picturesque when seen from above and at a distance, with its curling roofs and the coloured tiles of its temples, but, as usual, dirty and repulsive on closer acquaintance; and right glad we were that we had failed to accomplish our full stage thither, and had been fortunate enough to spend two nights outside it. We descended through a lane winding between smiling tree-embowered homesteads until we came to the bank of the river. We then crossed by a suspension bridge about half-way down the steep banks covered with trees, and ascended on the other side to the main highway that came down the valley from Omi Hien. This was the usual paved narrow roadway of Szechuan, and we now made good going. It was raining, and so far the by-path by which we had come had necessitated cautious walking. We entered the town traversing the main street, in one of the filthiest inns of which we picked up our "boy," who

alleged sore feet as the reason for having left us boyless all the preceding day at Lei Shih Kou. He was much put out at our not having made the full stage on the first day, alleging, with some truth, that we should have difficulty in making up the arrears, it being now past seven with a full 90 *li* (30 miles) before us, including a stiff mountain pass. The so-called 10 *li* we had come already had occupied an hour's steady walking. We passed on up a rise on the outskirts of the little town, where, in a tea-house bridging a fine waterfall, we stopped for breakfast of tea and maize bread. The road led down the valley by the banks of the swift-flowing river. Soon after eight o'clock the sun came out; there was not a breath of wind, and we found it intensely hot. There was considerable traffic on the road, conspicuous being strings of porters carrying blocks of black salt up country from Tze Liu Ching, the whole valley being richly cultivated and populous. The path led, as usual, sometimes along the flats over grassy meadows, then mounting an overhanging cliff, and so up and down without any attempt at rendering the rises less steep than nature had left them, as is the way with Chinese roads.

At noon we reached the market town of Ta Wei, consisting of one long dirty crowded street built alongside a fine rushing river of pellucid water—the stream we had followed down from its source at Omi. Here we tiffined in what we should once have called an exceptionally filthy inn, having with much difficulty managed the necessary rub down and change of clothing in semi-privacy, thanks to our numerous escort. We were nearly overcome by the sudden heat after our fortnight's spell of cold weather, and doubted whether, after all, we had not undertaken more than we could accomplish, for we had still 50 *li* (16 miles) to go, and we felt already quite exhausted. The thermometer, which we hung up in the coolest passage-way in the inn, and where we spread our tiffin table, marked 84°, and the usual importunate crowd shut out every breath of air. We fanned ourselves vigorously and put wet towels round our heads, which had suffered not a little from the

noonday sun. "Could we get horses?" we said, loath as we were to admit this early breakdown of our projected walking tour. We sent out the *ting-chai* to find or impress a couple of beasts. They came back after some waiting and declared there was not a horse in the whole town. We were in despair, for there was a high mountain before us, and the sun was terrible. The place was too uninviting to stop on in, even if doing so would not have put our whole march out of gear. Amongst the crowd of onlookers was one whose attractive appearance had led us to place her in a conspicuous position in the photograph which we had taken while lunch was being got ready; she was a Taoist nun. "Horses is it you want?" she said, coming forward. "Nothing easier, that is if you will ride by turns. I can get you an excellent horse who will carry you over the pass, after which you will have a comparatively easy walk. He will go for 300 cash." "Make it a thousand!" we felt inclined to answer, but 260 cash satisfied the owner, and a pretty little bay Chienchang pony about eleven hands high was brought round to the door of the inn. We blessed that nun and became converts to Taoism on the spot! It appeared that she was only a passer through like ourselves, but she had noticed the pony, and taking pity on a fellow woman's distress, had gone out and settled the bargain for us with the owner.

The town of Ta Wei was situated, not unlike Lung Ch'ih, in a three-cornered level valley with lofty mountains rising from its three sides; the streams down two of the valleys uniting to flow away by the third, the town being built at their junction. We crossed the Ta Wei branch by a covered-in wooden bridge which we loitered on to enjoy a delicious breeze created by the stream, the force of which made the rickety wooden bridge vibrate in a somewhat alarming manner. We here left the main road, and struck a short distance up the valley to the west; then across its level bottom, where the sun's rays seemed to defy every protection (Ta Wei is only 3150 feet above sea-level, and entirely shut in), to the bank of the river which flowed under steep cliffs and at the foot of the mountain we

had to cross. This river was shallow and rapid, and about 50 yards wide. We forded it on the pony's back with some difficulty, riding by turns, and scrambled up the steep rocky path which pursued its way in an interminable zigzag up the mountain side, *en lacet*, as the French well describe such roads. How thankful we were that we were able to rest alternately on the little beast's back, though it seemed cruelty to animals to make him climb such a mountain-side at all, let alone with thirteen stone on his back! As it was the little creature, although we were only going at a slow walk, had to stop every few paces and take breath. As we got up 1000 feet and looked round the view was very fine; the enclosed basin with its rivers sparkling in the sunshine and surrounded by mountain-peaks just capped with fleecy clouds; the hillsides covered with dark-green jungle; and the black-roofed town, the only evidence of human habitation, looking in the distance like a huge weathered limestone block fallen from one of its encircling mountains. It is the extraordinary steepness of the mountains and their often precipitous sides that give the distinguishing character to Chinese scenery and render it so eminently picturesque, go where one will. It possesses a wildness and air of mystery in keeping with the history of its strange people! We crossed the summit at a gap called Wa Yao Pu, or "Tiled Rest House," where we found a cottage and a delicious spring of pure cold water. From here we enjoyed our last view for many a day of Omi, with its cloud-capped peak, which bore N.N.E. from Ta Wei.

We now entered a more open country, and in the most revivingly fresh air travelled for some distance along a gravelly ridge, whose poor light-yellow soil nourished a wood of dwarf pine-trees, with here and there a cottage and clearing planted with maize. Then down a path as steep as they are made to the banks of another well-filled stream, with deep and blue water tearing over a rocky bed. The little pony made its way down in a marvellous manner, scrambling from rock to rock like a goat. A., riding astride, was so fixed in her Chinese saddle

that she could not fall off. We turned west up stream, following a narrow path between the water and a cliff, to a place called Tsai Kou (Herbs Gate). In the cliff a temple, dedicated to Kuauyin, had been hewn out, the path passing under a rocky archway which formed the entrance. It was now five o'clock, and we were not a little put out at finding we had still 20 *li* to go, and all up hill. The owner of the little pony who helped us so far on our road was wisely deaf to our offers of double fare if he would let us take him on to our destination; so there was nothing for it but to set out again on foot. We followed the bed of the stream some four or five miles up a narrow uncultivated valley, reminding us of the celebrated San Yu Tung glen near Ichang, with glimpses of side ravines of extreme beauty on our left as we passed along. After a few miles of this we left the glen to ascend the mountain which formed its left bank: its right bank was formed of vertical limestone cliffs, above which rose steep jungle-covered mountains. Our path now rose by a stone staircase, and very toilsome work we found it climbing to the top, which we thought we should never reach that night; but everything comes to an end at last, and so did this staircase which cuts its way through a thick *maquis* of dwarf oak, rhododendron and azalea scrub, pink waxy begonias and other lovely flowers growing in confusion: above this a mile or more of easy gradient along a high ridge, from which we looked down on the stream in its gorge 1000 feet below, brought us to the Chi Tien Tze, a rough range of buildings of red earth concrete surrounding a spacious court, half farmyard, half inn, which serves to accommodate the traffic, mostly pack-coolies, crossing the pass of Kuan Tou Shan. It was quite dark by the time we arrived, and the wilderness of the situation was enhanced by the dim light of the coloured paper lanterns which our coolies carried about. The air was very keen, but I enjoyed a hot bath in the court-yard in the privacy of the night, followed by a douche of cold water poured over me by a coolie mounted on a rock beside me, then donned my pyjamas and dressing-gown, and felt properly attired for the dinner which

was now awaiting us. We had been under way thirteen hours, and, except a short rest for tiffin, and three hours of pony divided between us, had walked up and down hill 105 *li*, or 35 miles in all, having gained in altitude since the morning a surplus to the good of just 3000 feet.

At this elevation—6200 feet—and on a mountain ridge, the air was delicious, a gentle breeze and a clear starlight night adding to the charm; our rest-house was quite isolated and we could hardly realise that we were only half a day's journey distant from the hot, dirty, crowded town of Ta Wei. The accommodation was of the roughest possible description, but we would not have exchanged it for a palace in the valley.

*August* 16.—Set out at dawn to cross the pass 700 feet higher; this we reached by a steep narrow gully and then stood on the crest of the Kwan-tou Shan, or "Peck-measure Mountain," so-called from the shape of its summit, which simulates the steep "tumble-home" sides of this necessary piece of furniture in every rice-shop. Just below the crest stood a tumble-down rest-house, where we breakfasted on a table in the open. Thence we descended rapidly by a very steep, winding, rough, rockstrewn path to the village of Luluping, 2500 feet below. Thence down again till we descended into a gully and crossed a stream flowing at the foot of a high steep range (5000 or 6000 feet) on our right, along which we coasted by a narrow path with a precipitous gorge on our left, our course being west. The air was hot and extraordinarily still, and at 2.30, on arriving at the hamlet of Ma Chang Kang, we were glad to rest awhile, sipping tea in the shade of a farmyard, surrounded by maize patches. Thence the path turned west and by south, and emerging from the Luluping valley, after nearly eight hours' steady walking, we were gladdened by the sight of the Tung river, here flowing between steep banks with a furious current, the opposite shore to that upon which we were standing (only a couple of hundred feet above the water) rising in lofty mountains, extraordinarily steep, whose summits were lost in the clouds. These were the Tapu mountains,

whose grand outline we had so often admired from Omi—the home of the independent and inaccessible Lolo, the northern frontier of whose territory is guarded by the unnavigable torrent of the Tung. The river, as we now looked down upon it, was about 150 yards wide, a deep body of whitish-green water swirling along in terrific whirlpools until it took a rectangular turn a couple of miles below us, on our left, and disappeared in the recesses of a narrow gloomy gorge. Here and there on the opposite shore, which was mostly cultivated, we could distinguish the white towers with verandah-like roofs in which the rare agriculturists have their fortified dwellings. It was the wildest and most romantic scene we had yet witnessed and had the additional charm of surprise.

We now followed up the Tung river westwards on its left bank, the path taking the lowest available foothold—usually from two to four hundred feet above the river. The day was warm and we had walked fully thirty miles when, at six o'clock, a notch in the steep hills on our right disclosed an affluent coming in from the north-west, a mile up the banks of which lay our destination for the night. At the point where we turned to enter the valley of Kin Kou ("the Golden Gate") another most magnificent view and another total surprise made us forget our fatigue and sit down to gaze at and take it in thoroughly before turning away. We stood on a lofty cliff overhanging the point of junction of the Tung and the "Golden Gate" rivers, the one stream flowing towards us from the right, the other from the left; the two uniting in a whirlpool at our feet and passing away by the valley we had just ascended. In front a wall of mountains stopped our advance; the only exit was either to our left across the north-west boundary of Lolo-land, or else turning to our right up the bed of the affluent, which appeared to emerge from a crack in the limestone mountains too narrow to pass through. Beneath, and partly wedged into this crack, and crowded on a narrow strip of level land between the towering cliffs and the torrent, stood the market town of Kin Kou Ho—a nest of most picturesque

white-walled, black-roofed houses, of Liliputian dimensions—a strange isolated swarm of humanity settled down on a diminutive oasis in the midst of a wilderness of gigantic uninhabited mountains. We took a photograph, but the distance and the hazy atmosphere gave a poor result. Turning then to the right, we descended by a steep slippery path to the river bed, and walking less than a mile along its rugged bank, at times stepping from rock to rock in the rushing torrent, found our picture dissolve itself into the main street of an unusually filthy crowded town. It was market day and a theatrical performance was in progress. We had already met parties of women and children returning home from the entertainment, who had invariably given a smiling reply to our greeting, "Come from the play?" We found, after some considerable delay, accommodation for our party in an inn quite in character with the town—horribly filthy and with its guest-room over the pig-sty and cesspool—and our cook immediately set about preparing dinner, much incommoded by the most importunate crowd we had yet encountered. One good feature of Chinese inns, however, is that the hot water is always to be had, so here it did not take me long to have a tub ready. The back door of the inn opened on to the stream—a great volume of water tumbling in glorious transparent masses over the big rocks which choked its bed, here about fifty yards across. Selecting a quiet back-water, and with two coolies holding up a sheet to screen me from the crowd (the greater portion of which I happily drew off from our cook), I had my tub placed beside the stream and finished off my ablutions with a dip in the clear cold water, just as heavy rain again set in, threatening, so the inhabitants said, to swell the already swollen stream to a dangerous size. Several houses, built in too dangerous proximity to the water, had been carried away in a spate two days before and some people drowned. We passed a not very happy night here. It was hot and close and damp; the place swarmed with insects; the smells were horrible; our bedroom, built out at the back on piles at the edge of the stream, seemed

in dangerous proximity to the torrent, whose roar, after nightfall, was so loud that we could hardly speak. The rain descended in sheets of water which made its way through the roof, so that we had difficulty in finding dry spots for our clothes. How we longed for another resting-place in the mountains like that of the previous night! But since then we had descended 4000 feet and were in a tiny townlet overcrowded with three thousand visitors to its market which had been held that day.

Owing to the steepness of the mountains and the general deforestation of the country, the rains drain off with extraordinary rapidity; thus the Yangtze river which on July 6, when we left Chungking, stood at 38 feet 6 inches above the winter level, rose by the 13th of that month, in consequence of extraordinarily heavy rains in Yunnan, to 96 feet 8 inches; fell again by August 3 to 28 feet, and then rose again to 57 feet on August 16, this rise being due to the rains in the basins of the Ya and Tung rivers, in which we were travelling; the rains themselves we experienced during our stay on Mount Omi. After this date the river went on, with only comparatively slight fluctuations, steadily subsiding towards its lowest February level. At Chungking the Yangtze is half a mile wide and when at its highest some thirty fathoms deep and running at about eight knots. But the fall of its bed is nothing to that of the Tung. Between Ichang and Chungking, a distance of 1800 *li* (say, 500 miles), the fall in the bed of the Yangtze is about 400 feet, while the difference in level between Kinkou Ho—"The Golden Gate"—and Kiating, where the Tung river debouches into the Min, is 800 feet, in a course of some 100 miles only. Thus the Tung is only navigated by wood-rafts, down stream, and that at the most favourable season.

# CHAPTER VIII

## UP THE SAIKING SHAN, OR "DRY PRAYER-BOOKS' MOUNTAIN"

ATTEMPT to Cross over among the Unconquered Lolos—Broken Roads and Bridges—Romantic Ravine—Wading—One Survivor out of Twenty-Five—Stupendous Vertical Walls—Deciding which way to Climb Saiking—Priest, Proprietor and Mountain Guide—Rock Amphitheatre Three Thousand Feet High—Herd of Cattle—Lily Precipice—Fairy Bridges—Up a Knife Edge—Then Ladders—Park-like Top—Rough Temple—Temple History—Rhododendron Thicket—Grinding Maize to Keep Warm—Cessation of Heat—Women Anchorites.

*August* 17.—Still pouring and impossible to make a start up the mountain with our laden coolies, apart from reports of broken-down bridges and impassable torrents. From the summit of the cliff yesterday evening we had noticed a raft ferrying passengers across the Tung to the Lolo country, so we set out with the camera hoping to utilise the enforced delay and gain some interesting photographs. The path led along the bank of the Golden Stream and over rocks lying in the water which had fallen from the cliff above. But, after scrambling and partially wading some distance, at the risk of falling into the roaring torrent, we had to give up the attempt, not caring to wade over our knees in the swift water. We turned back and crossed the river to the other bank by a suspension bridge which, unstayed by any guy lines, swayed in an alarming manner. Here we found a large temple with spacious courtyard, embedded in trees, in which were set out rows of tables at which had sat the spectators of the play on the

previous day. All was now deserted, however, and we made the best of our way back to our hotel, where we found the river still rising, and all progress said to be impossible that day. We tried hard to arrive at particulars but could only learn of bridges swept away and roads washed out by the rains. At last we set out to see for ourselves, leaving orders to have everything packed and ready for a start at noon. We walked half a mile up stream to where was another suspension bridge: here the road had indeed been cut into by the water and the half of a row of houses with their protecting embankment had fallen in, a furious eddy undermining it still more as we crawled along in the rear of the ruined houses. Crossing to the right bank, we ascended by a very steep slippery path, bordered by fine trees, to a small hamlet where after long cross-questioning (and having no followers with us) we obtained the admission that it was possible to proceed, but that we should have in different places to wade the stream, up which our course lay, owing to the plank bridges having been carried off by the recent spate. This stream, called the Shunshui Ho, falls into the Golden River on its right bank at a spot just above the town and below the suspension bridge by which we had crossed. It flows through such a narrow chasm that, walking in the rain along the opposite bank, we had scarcely noticed it, not imagining it possible that our onward path lay up this apparently inaccessible ravine. The stream issued from a chasm only a few yards wide whose vertical walls were lost in the clouds. We returned to the inn, ate our tiffin, and, after mixture of threats and arguments, got our train off by noon, just as the weather was beginning to clear. And what a climb we had! No wonder our laden coolies thought us tyrannical barbarians: the path was the slippery Szechuan red clay with hard rocks here and there over which small waterfalls were pouring. Up this we struggled a thousand feet or more, slipping at every step until the path turned off into the ravine, along the left bank of which it had been cut out at a height of several

hundred feet above the torrent. The point where we thus entered the glen was one of the most beautiful and romantic spots it is possible to conceive. The stream had cut out for itself a deep gorge and its affluents had cut out similar gorges at right angles. The view of many of these side chasms was bounded by magnificent waterfalls; at times, two waterfalls tumbling face to face and meeting in a mutual embrace. Here and there stood a patch of maize on a tiny slope, with a precipice above and another below, to which it would seem impossible for anything mortal, excepting birds, to have access. Lovely yellow lilies, pink-tipped begonias, relieved the bright green of the long grass, and dark pine forests crowned the mountain tops. This country, from Kinkou Ho westwards, was only opened to Chinese immigration in the reign of Tao Kuang, early in this century, following on the conquest of the country by the Emperor Kien Lung in 1775, when the Tibetan tribes or savages (Man-tse) as the Chinese call them, were driven back and another advance to the west was made by the ever-expanding Chinaman. Once past the neck of the gorge, our path was a fairly good one, although we were continually going up and down, as is the way in China, where no engineering labour has ventured to interfere with the ruggedness of nature. At times the road descended into the water and we had to wade past a projecting cliff, holding hands as an additional precaution for ourselves and our coolies as we made our way slowly against the rushing stream. As the valley opened out, isolated farmsteads appeared, surrounded by patches of maize, millet and buckwheat. The hard walking in the damp atmosphere warmed me so that I was tempted to undress and wade up a side stream to where it was fed by a waterfall, and I enjoyed a delicious bath in the pure water, but carried away a vivid recollection of this idyllic spot, in legs covered with an eruption from stinging nettles and in the loss of my finger rings, which had disappeared when I got back to the spot where I had laid down my clothes. The country was evidently not as wild and uninhabited as I had taken it to be;

nor was I (more's the pity) in the country of the Man-tse who never steal, though they rob on provocation.

Our men had settled to pass the night at an inn known as the Cave House (Ngai Fang Tsze), where we arrived not long before sunset. This turned out to be indeed a cave house; it was hollowed out of a cliff, and was as damp, close, dark, filthy, and warm a nest as a Chinaman could desire. We absolutely refused to remain there under any circumstances, and determined to push on to the next place, though we were told that it had been destroyed in the late spate. And so, when we at last arrived there, we found it had been. Part of the framework and a corner of the roof was all that remained of a once roomy rest-house; its site was now mainly occupied by piles of huge boulders. In a corner of the ruins sat a poor woman surrounded by a few pieces of worthless furniture saved from the wreck, and cooking her rice at an improvised furnace. She was covered with jewellery, and seemed anything but sad, although the only survivor of twenty-five persons who had occupied the house when, a few nights back, the spate came down. She told us we should find a farmhouse a mile on, which we did, and it was not long before we were supping comfortably under the stars on a grassy lawn in front of the Chen Wa Tien, or "tiled" shop of the Chen family, which, our thermometer boiling at just 206 degrees, we made to be 4200 feet above sea level—2300 above Kin Kou Ho, whence we had successfully advanced fifty *li*, or seventeen miles, into the unknown West in the space of six hours, through scenery of sublime beauty.

*August* 18.—Off by six; a beautiful morning; path still up the stream, which has its source in the Saiking Shan, our destination. We stepped out merrily through scenery similar to that of yesterday. After about five miles walking, we came to a break in the mountain wall of the opposite bank and through it caught our first glimpse since we had left Omi of the stupendous vertical walls of the Saiking, towering 6000 feet above our present level. But this break itself was the rift through which the recent spate had made its way. An

avalanche of huge angular blocks had rolled down, crossed the stream and surged up on the opposite shore, on which we stood, blocking our path and having to be climbed over. The Saiking mountain is formed of a mass of compact limestone, but fragments from its sides have doubtless yielded the talus which forms the slope at the foot of which runs the Chunshui Ho; and a torrent from its flanks had evidently, in its course to the river, washed out soil from under and led these loose fragments of the talus to come tumbling down the slope as we saw them in all their fresh disorder. Hence we ascended on to the level of a kind of bench, the hills on our right receding and opening out into a side valley near the junction with which stands the market town of Leng Chang ("Cold Market"), and a mile or more beyond that Kuei Hua Chang ("Cassia Flower Market"). This is composed of the usual single village street, dirty and ragged-looking as are nearly all these Szechuan mountain towns. But not being market day it was quiet and almost deserted. Outside one of the shut-up houses we called a halt and sat down on a bench to eat a cold breakfast from our stores—a meal which had too long been delayed owing to our porters having stopped on the way for their own breakfast and left us to walk on unattended. We now had to decide where to go next. Ta Tien Ch'ih, which was properly our destination for the ascent of the Saiking, was 15 miles further still, with a long steep pass intervening; the heat was oppressive, the air perfectly calm and the sun gaining power every moment. While thus hesitating and discussing with our men, who, of course, wanted to stop where they were, who should come along but a young priest, bright and intelligent-looking, from whom we at once got the intelligible answers we had failed to extract from the inhabitants. To our no little surprise, the priest turned out to be the holy man of the mountain himself, and, indeed, as it afterwards turned out, its sole proprietor. He had just come from a neighbouring village where he had gone that morning to *k'anchang* (market), and he was now returning with a bundle of provisions. Although the path up from

East Front of Sai King Mountain. An Amphitheatre of Rock 3000 feet vertical.

Ta Tien Ch'ih was the easier, there was a way up from this side which led into that one, which he was about to follow. Here was an opportunity to be seized; the priest said if we started at once and made haste we could reach the summit before nightfall. Leaving some of our coolies to go on to Ta Tien Ch'ih, where we proposed resting a few days at the comfortable altitude of 6000 feet, and in the luxury of an empty house all to ourselves (a house which had been placed at our disposal by the kindness of the Roman Catholic mission at Huang Mu Chang) we set out with the remainder of our train in company with our priestly guide. Turning back by a path almost parallel with that by which we had come, we crossed a low intervening ridge which conceals the view of the mountain from Kuei Hua Chang and then entered upon a comparatively smooth slope which ascends by an easy gradient to the foot of the great precipice which stood before us. It was an exceptionally fine clear day, and the mountain, with its 3000 feet high wall, looked quite near. But it was a long and weary up-hill walk before we had even traversed the slope, which was about a mile in width and furrowed by innumerable shallow streams meandering through it, which we were for ever crossing and recrossing, the ground getting more barren and rocky as we advanced. We had now arrived within a mile of the foot of the precipice and, as we ascended a little knoll and gained a complete view of its outline, we were indeed awe-struck with its grand proportions. Imagine an amphitheatre of rock, 3000 feet vertical—as I afterwards measured it—out of whose sides spouted half a dozen fountains of pellucid water, the sources of the streams we had been traversing. A slight rim of green marked the upper edge of the wall against the blue sky, the summit itself being almost a perfect level. We saw no possible means of ascending, and our position reminded us of that of the first explorers of the Roraima mountain in British Guiana, which we imagine, from the description given by Dr. Perkins, the Saiking Shan much resembles in its apparent inaccessibility and the completely isolated forest on

its top. We were looking at the north-east face: up the north-west precipice, facing Ta Tien Ch'ih, said the priest, runs the elephant's trunk: we climb up to the snout and then an easy path up the trunk takes us to the top. It was now nearly four; we had come up 2000 feet above Kuei Hua Chang and had still 4000 to do. We paused awhile on the bank of one of the small streams—called Er Tao Ho ("Number Two River")—some three yards wide, about a foot deep, and ate a rapid meal, washed down with its delicious cold water. We now bore to the right, ascending by a steep path through thick jungle to a small plateau called Lan Pao Ping ("See-Treasure-Flat"), where was a grass clearing upon which was a small herd of grazing cattle—the first we had yet seen in China during a residence of over thirty years. On this plateau stood an isolated cube-shaped rock that had evidently broken off from the side of the mountain, which was now on our left; and on the rock was a straw-thatched cottage, approached by a ladder, up which the cow-herd bolted precipitately on catching sight of the strange procession. From here, rounding the corner of the mountain, we ascended the face of the Lien Hua Ngai, or "Lily Precipice," by an exceedingly steep rugged path, through jungle amidst which delicious ripe blackberries were growing in profusion, whereupon we called an occasional halt to do justice to them, and most refreshing they were. Hence to the Kung Mu Shih, or "Male and Female Rock," which is connected by a Tien-sien Chiao, or "Fairy Bridge," with Lei Tung Ping ("Thunder Cave Flat"). These "fairy bridges, heaven-built," are common throughout all the lime-stone country from Ichang westwards, and the present one formed a most opportune connection with Lei Tung Ping, which we should put down as the tip of the elephant's snout, though the Chinese, with characteristic vagueness, refuse to define such phenomena precisely. At Lei Tung Ping stands a rock, the head of which has been carved into a face of Amita Buddha, protecting the Tian-men, or "Gate of Heaven"—a natural cleft, through which we pass to the Lohan rocks,

upright pinnacles which simulate the eighteen Arahat or immediate disciples of Gautama. The path now leads up a knife edge, along the top of a wall of rock just wide enough for a not too difficult pathway, as the sides of the wall are clad with jungle, and so, in most places, afford a sort of protection; then come the Arahat rocks, after passing which the road brings up short against the Kuan Yin Hgai ("Goddess of Mercy Cliff")—a name very popular for precipices in Szechuan. Here the ascent is continued by ladders fixed against the rock-side with, of course, no hand-rail, and, if one lost one's hold, a fall of 1000 feet, such as it made one dizzy to look down on. Go up we must, and could, but should we ever be able to come down them? But for our good fortune in meeting with the priest, I doubt if we should have ever faced them; our porters did not like them, although we had given them easy loads, and they were comparatively comfortable with their *peitse* behind their shoulders. There were three ladders in all, with twenty to thirty rungs apiece—put in anyhow at unequal angles and distances, *more Sinense*. A Chinaman has no nerves, and hence the absence of guards in such places, such as we feeble barbarians demand. At last, having successfully negotiated the dreaded precipice of the Goddess of Mercy, we arrived in safety at the Ling Kuan Lo, or "Hall of the Soul." Nothing more was now before us but a steep path through thick wood, which landed us suddenly on the summit, which, however, we should not have recognised as such, surrounded, as it were, by thick forest, but for the abrupt change in the path from the vertical to the horizontal.

From this point, a walk of a mile and a half by a winding path over gently undulating ground, through virgin forest, with here and there glades of rich grass, and crossing many streams of beautiful clear water running to the edge of the cliff, where they toppled over in glorious waterfalls. It is astonishing where all this water comes from, seeing that the Saiking Shan is the highest of all the surrounding mountains. Tired as we were, we thoroughly enjoyed this final walk on the

level, through the over-arching jungle and by winding woodland paths, until, just as it was getting too dark to see our way, our coolies had already lit their lanterns, we ascended a low knoll by a short steep path, and entered the one temple of the Saiking, having ascended 6500 feet since the morning. Barring short rests for hasty meals, we had been fourteen hours afoot, and that, thanks to the glorious air, without over-fatigue.

*August* 19.—Heavy rain squalls in the night, followed by a beautiful day, *i.e.*, the sun shone continuously upon the little knoll upon which the temple is built, but all below was a sea of cloud, so that there was no view whatsoever, and, instead of being on the top of a mountain where a short walk in any direction would send us over a gigantic precipice, it might, for all appearances, have been a warm autumn morning in the English country; the rich short turf, the wild fruits, the little brooks and the fresh misty air, all reminded us of home. And how glad we were to have a well-earned rest before us, after six days tramp over the mountains from Omi hither, in this perfectly ideal spot! The temples or monastery comprised a range of buildings, loosely put together and of generally tumbledown appearance: the main erection, facing east, contained the shrine of Kuanyin, while a lofty barn-like wing, facing south, contained lodging for the monks, a spacious kitchen and the guest-room in which we were lodged. Everywhere the wind blew through the rough planks, and the floor of rough rock, with steep high steps uniting one room with the other, was full of cavities and often rendered slippery by the rain that leaked through, occasioning us more than one severe fall and rendering it absolutely impossible to move after nightfall without a lantern. During our three days on the mountain the range of the thermometer was from 44° night minimum to 63° day maximum. The priests, of whom there were two, besides a servant, who collected wood and water and ground the daily supply of maize which, with salted turnip, formed the staple of their diet, cowered most of the time over the green-wood fire on the ground, the acrid blinding fumes of

which mostly kept us at a distance. We put on our warmest clothes and enjoyed the fresh cool air, taking our meals in the open, when the rain permitted. The temple was named the Pootoo Sze or Pootoo monastery, after the celebrated island of that name in the Chusan archipelago, equally dedicated to the popular Kuanyin Buddha. Formerly the temples on the mountain were more numerous and we came across their ruins occasionally in the grass, dating from the Ming period. Since that time the mountain had been deserted by all but the indefatigable wood-cutters; then, in the reign of Tung Chih, 13th year (1874), the mountain was re-opened and pilgrims, of whom some 300 (many being Thibetans) had climbed up this year, were again resorting to its shrine. Our young priest friend, who had been delegated to the post by the Chinting abbot on Omi, had, he informed us, recently acquired the mountain by purchase for the sum of Tls. 700 (£150) in order, he said, to preserve its forests from the rapacity of the lumbermen. For this sum he had acquired a unique domain of some 800 acres, perfectly walled in by inaccessible precipices and approachable only by the removable ladders. He had raised the needful money by going about the province three years armed with a *yuen-pu*, and it is really astonishing what an amount of money is collected by subscription in this way for public purposes in a poor country like China. We enjoyed a real hermit's tiffin of bread and cheese, and delicious water of a temperature of 45°. We thought our ruinous lodging a delightful change from our ditch-encircled room at Omi, and only wished we had come on here sooner. We boiled our thermometer twice daily, as on Omi, and made the height 11,100 feet as against Omi's 10,500. In this we differ from Baber, who reverses these figures. The Chinese however, who are generally right in such matters, all declare the Saiking to be higher than Omi. In the afternoon we descended by the only practicable path, down the edge of the elephant's trunk, to the top of the Kuanyin precipice, and, getting below the clouds, enjoyed a magnificent view down the valley with its

swollen watercourses. The surrounding mountains looked wild in the extreme, not a human habitation being visible. Everything was reeking with moisture, but the air felt most invigorating without being uncomfortably cold.

*August* 20.—The sun rose clear of clouds and then vanished for the day. We walked through the thick wood to the edge of the precipice at the back of the temple. The cliff on this, the west, side seemed to be even higher than on the north-east, up the face of which we had come; it descended sheer into a wild uninhabited valley 5000 feet below us. In order to see it, we had to break our way through the thick bush, mostly composed of rhododendron trees, about twenty feet high, with wide-spreading gnarled roots. Below was a carpet of moss a foot thick, which, with the rhododendron roots, overhung the cliff, and on which we had to stand to get a view. We saw the snowy range, which looked quite near, instead of being still eight days journey distant, but the *coup d'œil* was not so grand as that from the more distant Omi. In the afternoon our coolie came up from Ta Tien Ch'ih with supplies which he carried in his *peitse* on his back; he had found the road very difficult, had fallen down and broken all the eggs, also a bottle of native wine, with which we had hoped to keep out the cold and damp. Everything was reeking with moisture; in the evening heavy rain set in, which continued all night; the roof leaked like a sieve, and big puddles formed in the hollows of the mud-floor. We were glad to find a dry corner and get under the blankets as soon as supper was over.

*August* 21.—Breakfast in our bedroom by candle-light, there being no window, while it was less exposed to the weather than the outer apartment, through which the wind and rain blew as in a barn, and that a ruinous one. The thermometer only reached 49°, and we found it hard to keep warm: we did not care to go out, and it was impossible to descend the mountain in such weather. These summer rains, to any one who has seen the huge torrents they produce, are fully sufficient to account for the great rise in the Yangtze River at this season.

Rockhill, the Thibetan traveller, justly remarks: "The idea that the great and sudden freshets that occur in Western China are caused by the melting of the snow on the mountains of Eastern Thibet, or by the great rainfall in that country, is an entirely erroneous one." And he adds: "The mistaken removal of all timber and brushwood from the mountain sides is the cause of these accidents." Even the blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries of the day before could not tempt us out, and we spent our time praying for the rain to cease, and trying to warm ourselves by aiding our priest—Yuantse was his name—to grind his maize, and we found the horizontal motion pretty tiring for the arms.

*August* 22.—Poured again all night through, but the morning set in with a fresh north-west breeze and brought cold, clear weather. There was a real autumnal feeling in the air and, by the Chinese calendar, to-day is the "Cessation of heat." For the first time since our arrival on the mountain we saw Omi; the mountain stood out quite clear in the north-east and looked very near; in the south-east were the rugged peaks Ta Pu and the Ta Liang Shan or "Great Beam Mountain"; and between we had a glimpse of the steaming Kiating plain, for was it not August, and in latitude 29°, although we were shivering in the sunshine? This view enabled us to realise for the first time how high up we were. We quickly turned in to an early breakfast, hastily packed up and said "Good-bye" to our friend Yuantse, and by nine o'clock were half-way down the mountain. We first walked half an hour on the level through the narrow stream-crossed woodland path to the top of the trunk, all the time dreading the descent of those terrible ladders. However, on reaching the top of the Kuanyin cliff we were enveloped in thick cloud, which cut off the abyss from our vision—a relief to us feeble plain-dwellers. Before the fog shut down on us we had paused to look back at the precipice on whose summit we had spent three days. About 30 feet below the top we were just able to recognise a small cave with a miniature rock platform in front of it: below this a sheer fall of 3000 feet. Here

two sisters, we were told, had devoted themselves to a holy life, to purify themselves, as the Chinese say. They were let down by a rope and there lived many years, their father, our informant said, sending them supplies of rice at regular intervals. They left three years ago, their term of purification having expired. None but the impassive Eastern would, we should think, be found to go through such an ordeal. Upon reaching the Lohan ridge we set up the camera, as from this point one has the great precipice right in front: we stayed three hours here waiting for the fog to lift; we had too far to go to make it safe to remain longer. To reach our destination —the Ta Tien Ch'ih, or "Great Heavenly Pool"—we had to turn north-westwards by a pass that led us past the great west precipice; of this we got one glimpse and quickly set up the camera, but too late, and another long halt here led to no better result. The path was a very steep one, very narrow and very rough; the air was close and sultry, and we found it fully as tiring as going up, where each step forward took us into better air. We descended into the Ta Tien Ch'ih valley—a small basin of maize-fields with a shallow lake in the centre, surrounded by scrub-covered mountains, from which everything in the semblance of a tree had been carefully removed—just in time to reach the village inn before nightfall, having descended nearly 5000 feet.

# CHAPTER IX

## ANCIENT LOLOLAND

ROMAN Catholic Village—Deforestation—Nine Thousand Feet Pass—Vertical Ravine between us and our Goal—*Huang Mu* Market Town—Roman Catholic Mission—Lolo Groves—Market Day—Lolo Beauties—Lolos to Tea—Lolos Going Home—Salt Carriers' Gains—Three Passes—Rudeness in Market Towns—Hothouse Vegetation—Cantilever Bridge.

*August* 23, 24, 25.—We were delayed three days at Ta Tien Ch'ih waiting for a special courier whom we had ordered up from Kiating with our mails. We stayed in the "Chinting," a roomy native one-floor house built by the villagers, who are mostly old Roman Catholic families, to receive the priest, who lives at Huangmuchang, thirty miles to the west, upon the occasions of his visitations; the centre room being fitted up with an altar. This had been put at our disposal with the courtesy towards travellers which distinguishes the Catholic Fathers throughout China. We found the Christian villages most friendly. They had actually three girls' schools, and their houses were as clean as those surrounding them—members of three religions, as they called themselves—were dirty. To us it was delightful to have a house to ourselves and enjoy the privacy which is absolutely wanting in Chinese inns or temples. But it came very near proving our Capua. We were disinclined to move from it; it poured with rain nearly the whole time, and the valley we found to be close and damp, though cool, and we hardly felt up to much more

continuous walking. So we endeavoured to hire one of the many ponies that were grazing in the swampy meadows round the lake, but, though promised each day that ponies should be brought to our door the following morning, when the time arrived there was always some excuse, although we had been asked and had agreed to pay an exorbitant sum for their hire. It turned out afterwards that they were all mares, the stallions being away engaged in the transport of brick tea, and that the owners had never had any serious intention of hiring to us. The temperature while here ranged from night minimum of 56° to a day maximum of 67°, thus maintaining the character of Szechuan for its exceptionally equable climate. The height above the sea level we made to be 6020 feet. The valley produced little beyond maize in the bottom and a jungle grass on the slopes which is burnt for potash. A hundred years ago all this country was covered with dense forest, but now, except in the most inaccessible spots, there is scarcely a tree to be seen. As the naturalist Amand David, who resided long in these parts, remarks, the Chinese antipathy to forests is due, probably, as much to their dread of wild beasts as to their need of lumber and firing. They are agriculturists and not hunters, and they destroy everything that interferes with the former pursuit, as they, in like manner, steadily and stealthily have driven out the aboriginal Thibetan and Lolo tribes by whom up to Kien Lung's time, all this country was exclusively inhabited. Within a day's journey of Ta Tien Ch'ih, Baber, 15 years before the time of our journey, found wild cattle known as the Bos Buemini or Beyamini. We crossed by low passes into neighbouring similar valleys, swampy ground occupying the bottom, the pools full of fish, the steep mountain sides covered with long grass, the spiked seeds of which tore through one's clothes and are a terror to dogs. Here and there a tumbledown farmstead surrounded by patches of maize, a wild gloomy country, from our walks in which we were careful to get back before dark. On the 24th our courier arrived with London letters to the 2nd of June, and Chung-

king dates to the 7th of August. We found here the best honey we had ever tasted in our lives, and bought four catties for 200 cash a catty (less than sixpence for a pound), which proved a valuable addition to the unleavened corn bread on our subsequent journey. Although we found our residence here, owing to the damp, the reverse of beneficial, nowhere had we seen such healthy-looking Chinese; they had a fine colour, unlike the usual yellow complexions, and were dressed in warm knitted woollen jackets from Ta-chien-lu.

*August 27.*—Set out at daylight to walk to Hung Mu Chang, thirty miles across the mountains. We quitted the "Celestial Pool" by an easy pass which led us into another wild valley, where, walking along a muddy path by the side of a reed-grown pond, we stopped for breakfast at an isolated farmhouse and inn, called Siao Tien Tse (Small Inn). The place was so filthy that we hurried on up the valley. Needless to say the proprietors were heathen; and we resolved at once to tiffin in a Christian house if possible. Shortly afterwards we entered a wild uninhabited glen, up which we ascended steadily, following the course of a stream which meandered down it. Near the head of the glen we turned off to the left and commenced to ascend the side by a steep zigzag path which brought us to a cottage called Shan Chiao (mountain foot), where we halted for a few moments to collect our train in the fog. The country and the weather reminded us not a little of the mountains west of Killarney. From here on we continued the ascent up an interminable and abominably steep zigzag path that seemed to go on and on for ever in the clouds, until at last we halted in a cottage 50 feet below the top of the pass, a resting-place for porters, who use this road to carry goods—mainly salt—from Kiating to Fulin. Here we boiled our thermometer and found ourselves to be 9400 feet above the sea: the pass is called Soyilin ("Rain-clothes Forest") from the trees, of which not one now remains. The ridge on the top was extremely narrow, and the descent on the other side, another steep zigzag over a rock-strewn path which tried us

empty-handed, and we could not help pitying the poor salt porters with 200 lbs. of what looked like lumps of reddish-grey stone on their backs. At last we got out of the clouds, and the magnificent escarped walls of the Lolo country, beyond the Tung River, came once more into view. We proceeded up and down intervening ridges until we again found a ravine with a small stream at its bottom, down the bed of which our path lay. At half-past one we reached Chien Peng Tse ("Potash Sheds"), where, in a pleasingly clean cottage, kept by a Roman Catholic, we ate our mid-day meal, reclining awhile afterwards on a heap of chaff in the corner for a short siesta. Then on down the stream which here had already cut itself a walled-in channel in the limestone, till we reached the hamlet of Leng Chu Ping ("Cool Bamboo Flat"), and, passing through a short covered-in street, with about half a dozen houses on either side of the narrow pathway, we came in view of Huang Mu Chang. There it stood, on a charming wide green slope backed by a range of mountains which bounded the view before us; it appeared to be two or three miles off, and we congratulated ourselves, saying that for once the natives had not under-estimated the distance. The hamlet, viewed from this point, appeared beautifully situated on its broad green slope, with groves scattered here and there, looking towards the huge cliffs of Lololand, which fall sheer into the waters of the Tung river, here invisible; while the blue smoke of the mid-day fires ascended into the calm sun-lit sky. We walked briskly on, when all at once we were brought up short by a ravine about 1000 feet deep, between whose vertical walls flowed a deep rapid torrent coming from the high range on our right. A 500-feet long suspension bridge would have spanned the chasm and saved many miles of precipitous road; but there was no bridge, and we had to turn aside to the right up the left bank of the ravine. Here a dangerous mountain path led us up to the head of the ravine, then a sharp descent to a spot where the river came tumbling down the mountain in a series of magnificent cascades at the foot of

which was a narrow bridge. Crossing this we ascended by a still worse path on the opposite bank, the path leading in places along the sides of the precipice, across small gaps bridged over by a couple of fir-trees with straw laid over them to give a securer footing; then mounting the summit of a cliff 200 or 300 feet up a steep narrow path; then down again the same distance; and so up and down continually. At length we left the ravine and mounted on to a plateau which sloped gently up to the range of steep mountains which fence it in on the north and west. To the south and east it ends abruptly in a ravine, whose vertical cliffs, over 1000 feet deep, follow down the stream we had just crossed to its junction with the great Tung River, some six miles distant, on the further right bank of which rise the stupendous cliffs that guard the mountains of the unconquered Lolo. It was now sunset, and having toiled all day up and down the steepest of mountain paths, we were not sorry to finish over the mile or more of level ground, through narrow paths winding amongst tall maize, which at length landed us in the single, narrow, dirty street, which forms the "Chang" or market-town of Huang Mu. We put up at a dilapidated but tolerable inn, got our supper at nine o'clock, and turned in immediately afterwards, both dead-beat.

*August* 28.—A perfect summer's day, a thick white mist in the early morning hiding the expanse of maize-fields upon which the back windows of our inn looked out. A deliciously fragrant air and the thermometer at 60°, the elevation of Huang Mu Chang being just 6050 feet above sea level. We enjoyed a breakfast of bread and our delicious honey and cold spring water, and thought this the most bracing air we had yet experienced, therefore, as the morrow was market-day, we made up our minds to rest and enjoy ourselves for a couple of days on this charming *plateau*. We called on the amiable young priest, who presides over the Catholic Mission here as at that at Ta Tien Ch'ih, where he had already lent us his house, and were much interested in the neat well-kept range of Chinese buildings, which form a striking contrast to the

dirty town on the edge of which they stand. They comprise a chapel and separate schools for boys and girls—the former a boarding-school—the whole standing in a well-furnished garden surrounded by a high wall. The parish is a wide one, hence the need of a boarding-school, as also of a very fine mule on which the priest makes his visitations. He had kindly invited us to stay with him, taking for granted that we were a couple of Protestant missionaries, but on finding a lady was of the party very regretfully withdrew his invitation. To our regret, too, as charming though the place was, our inn was not one to linger at. Numerous groves of fine trees are dotted about the *plateau*, giving it a park-like appearance, and with our spy-glass we noticed herds of cattle grazing in the distance, the whole scene being markedly non-Chinese. This is explained by the fact that the bulk of the inhabitants are still Lolo—tame Lolo—and under Chinese rule, but free from the tree-destroying mania that pervades all the Chinese immigrants into these western mountains. One very fine and extensive grove of large trees, one of those said to have been set apart for burning their dead, situated on a rocky elevation overlooking the ravine of the stream whose head waters we had crossed the evening before, attracted our attention, and, taking our luncheon and books, we spent a most delightful day under its shade. The air was that of England on a fine day in June, the shade maximum rose to just seventy, and a glorious breeze was blowing. The views were grand in the extreme; immediately in front, the wall-like boundary of independent Lolo-land—a precipice of fully 4000 feet falling into the Tung, with steep green slopes and lofty peaks rising beyond until lost in clouds; while at our feet rose the rugged rocks and pinnacles of limestone which formed the right bank of the torrent we had taken four hours to cross from one bank to the other. Blackberries and strawberries abounded, and the scattered farms were hidden in groves of walnut and other fruit trees. Walking back through the fields, the views were entirely shut out by the maize which here flourishes in great luxuriance.

This lofty mountain mass that bounds our southern horizon, squared off by huge vertical apparently inaccessible precipices, still awaits the explorer. Its area, according to Baber, is about 11,000 square miles. It is called here the "Ta Liang Shang," Great Ridge Mountains, "a designation which does not mean any particular peak or peaks, or special range, but applies to the whole Lolo region, a district mountainous throughout, and containing a few summits which over-top the limit of perpetual snow." From the Yunnan side, looking northwards, it is an equally conspicuous object, and it is called there the Taiyang Chiao—"Sun Bridge"—surely a magnificent name and not inappropriate; the setting sun traversing the crown of the portentous causeway. One of our chair coolies, whom we brought from Chunking, a very good-tempered useful fellow, who has been for some years soldiering in these parts, tells us thrilling stories of the valour and audacity of those mountaineers, and makes us long to see them, and, as to-morrow is market day, when Lolos come in to the fair, we determine to halt another day in this, one of the dirtiest of villages, but, by nature, one of the most perfect spots for a summer residence possible to conceive. The wide *plateau*, which ranges from six to seven thousand feet above the sea, yields ample space for riding or walking over gently undulating ground. Woods of fine trees afford thick shade; the ground is well drained by the Tung river, flowing in a chasm four thousand feet below, and the surrounding mountains are far enough off not to obstruct the breeze, as was the case in the narrow valleys in which we had hitherto halted. Our ramshackle inn was crowded with visitors who had come in for to-morrow's fair, and who kept up a talking and shouting nearly all through the night. Wine is as cheap as tea and in much more common use in these mountains.

*August* 29.—Market day. The long single-street village was jammed with people. Salt seemed to be the principal article of traffic; lumps, looking like chunks of dirty red sandstone, showing well-defined marks of stratification, lay on the

stone curbs of the gutters reeking with black slime, and were divided up by choppers according to the wants of the purchasers. All this salt is carried on their backs, over the mountains, by porters from Tse Liu Ching. But the chief point of attraction for us was the temple courtyard at the entrance to the town, where the Lolo women mostly congregated, busily chaffering over the baskets of produce, chiefly buckwheat and peas, which they had brought in for sale. They were so intent upon their work that we were able to mix in the crowd, edging our way through the compact masses, and to examine them closely. They were fine, sturdy, rosy-cheeked lasses, with round laughing faces, natural feet, of course, and the carriage of women who will walk their forty miles a day over mountain paths at five miles an hour, and a grace of attitude most pleasing to look upon. They are dressed somewhat differently from Chinese women, in tight leggings and a long coat gracefully looped up behind into the wide girdle, the legs tightly bandaged round from the ankle to the knee upwards with blue calico; a black band with silver ornaments round the forehead or more generally voluminous white turban completing the costume. But when the camera was produced, the excitement compelled us to take refuge upon the stage which projects into the courtyard of all these temples, from whence the crowd could gaze at us undisturbed, while we were able to photograph them in full front. We made a purchase of some buckwheat from one of the best-looking girls, or rather matrons, which we had ground, and which furnished us a fine supper of buckwheat cakes, eaten with the delicious local honey. The fair seller we invited to come and take tea with us at our hotel when market was over, and, when the time came, by strong insistence, upon our "boy" fetching them in, we were visited by two of the women accompanied by their husbands, big, bony dark-skinned wrinkled-faced men of upright carriage and resolute bearing. The crowd of ever curious Chinese, whom it was impossible to keep from pressing in upon our party, prevented our learning much from the interview. The men had brought in cattle for sale and were now returning home with

their small purchases. They spoke a little Chinese and roughly imitated the Chinese forms of politeness. As the market broke up, it was interesting to see the Lolo men ride off on their shaggy ponies, dressed in sheepskin jackets, with the paper parcels containing their purchases stuck in their hair, and many of them the worse for liquor. Of the women, some rode, always astride, while others followed on foot at a swinging gait behind their lords and masters. By sunset the village had resumed its normal state of quietude, and we were able to pack up and make our preparations for an early start on the morrow.

*August* 30.—Off at daylight, in thick fog, which at 8 o'clock changed to rain. Our path lay along the foot of the serrated range which hemmed in the wide valley on the north and west, and which we crossed at noon by a pass 1500 feet above Huang Mu Chang. While skirting the edge of the range, previous to ascending the steep zigzag path that led up to Malie-shan, as the rest-house at the summit was named, we had to cross several of those provoking ravines that bar all the roads hereabouts, descending 200 feet by a rough, slippery path down the face of a cliff, crossing a diminutive stream, and then a similar ascent on the opposite side. If being thus constantly baulked in the approach to one's immediate destination was annoying to us walking empty handed (*kung shou*, as the Chinese call it), what must it be to the troops of laden coolies who, in Central and Southern China, carry on all the traffic where, as here, water routes are not available? At the top of the pass was a salt *octroi*, where each salt porter had to pay a tax of fourteen cash on his load. We found out most of these poor coolies were dealers on their own account, buying the salt in Kiating to resell it in Fulin—our destination for the night. The profit they make gives them about 100 cash a day (threepence) besides their food of maize damper (*pa-pa*), costing about half that sum. They carry about a hundredweight, and make from 8 to 10 miles a day. But they are long miles, as we discovered when we halted for tiffin, upon being told that we had only come 30 *li*. We were now 7500 feet up, and were

bound for the large town of Fulin, on the banks of the Tung. We went up and down, crossing three passes, all enveloped in mist, and saw nothing but the rough path, cut out in big, irregular steps in the coarse red sandstone rock, and the thick bushes of arbutus, rhododendron, blackberry, and other shrubs which lined the path and covered us with their drippings. Turning the corner of a ravine, at length, at 3 P.M., a rift in the clouds disclosed the rich, hilly vale of Fulin, 5000 feet below, with its two rivers glittering in the sunshine, the horizon bounded by the high mountains beyond the Tung river, forming the Tibetan border—one of those grand extensive views that amply repay the toil of reaching them—as beautiful as it was unexpected. Continuing down the steep slippery path, we reached in an hour the market town of Ma Lie Chang, crowded and filthy. It was market day and we hurried through, not without the too polite attention of the more rowdy portion of the populace. These market towns in Szechuan are the flies in the honey to the foreign tourist: everybody comes in from all the country round, more for pleasure—*shwe*, as they call it here—than for business, and the stranger passing through, especially a foreign woman striding along, is usually looked upon as fair game. It is impossible to avoid these places and go round, as the only practicable path leads straight through the crowd. On approaching them we used to form up in close order, putting our bravest coolie, an old soldier, in front to shout out and clear the way. the rest following in single file, all stepping out as fast as we could, and thankful if, on making our exit from the long street, which often used to seem interminable, clods of earth were not added to the cabbage stalks with a volley of which we were on more than one occasion saluted, when the mob of shouting hoodlums cared to follow us no further. As far as Omi we had had our chairs, and so suffered comparatively little annoyance; but on foot it is humiliating to one's European pride to have to confess that the "heir of all the ages" inspires no respect whatever. We had dismissed the official escort that accompanied us as far as Tatienchih, as we found them absolutely

useless for protection, always disappearing when any trouble arose, and if ever asked about us, probably saying, "I know not the man." Our own coolies whom we had brought from Chungking stood by us well, and were as indignant as we were, and, I am convinced, would have helped us to fight the mob had we cared to lead them on or thought it advisable to do so. Apart from this, and whenever we could obtain a hearing, we were always treated with great civility, but these wretched markets have no resident mandarins, and the occasion is one for free drinking. The fox, they say, gets used to being hunted, and we ultimately accepted the *chang* as all in the day's work.

The fine bracing air of the highlands over which we had climbed in the morning, and which seemed to dissipate all sense of fatigue, now gave place to the close atmosphere of the shut-in valley, and the heavy odour of the paddy-fields down through which the path now wound; the thermometer quickly jumped from 60° to 80° and we once more, after a fortnight's interval, found ourselves in the close hot-house air that distinguishes this moist province. The vegetation again resumed its Szechuan luxuriance; well-built roomy farmsteads, white plaster with the black beams showing through, circled by wide-spreading eaves, and approached through heavily roofed gateways, lay dotted about, surrounded by groves of large handsome fruit-trees. Forests of the *tung* or varnish tree covered the lower slopes of the mountains, the upper peaks covered with scrub and pine until lost in the clouds. Down, down went the stony path through terraced paddy-fields over strata of shales, sandstones, crimson and purple, here tilted almost vertical, to Peh-ngai-Ho White Cliff River, which we reached at sunset, finding ourselves once more only 2300 feet above sea level. Upon one of the many huge blocks of sandstone strewn about the valley—almost a perfect cube—stood a small temple, embowered in trees, the approach to which was by a steep winding staircase cut out of the rock. Though late, and with still some distance to go, we could not forbear, notwithstanding the remonstrances of our

attendants, halting to set up the camera and bring away a record of this picturesque object. And so it was, with hardly enough light to see our way across, that we reached the river—a foaming torrent of clear water, flowing over a shingly bed in many channels—the smaller of which we forded, crossing the main channel on a wooden cantilever un-railed-in bridge, about 30 feet long by 1 foot wide, at which we jibbed not a little at first. This was the nearer of the two parallel rivers we had caught a glimpse of from above, the city of Fulin being on the banks of the second river; we now, to our surprise, found that a steep ridge, about 500 feet high, separated us from this, our proposed destination, and, as it was now quite dark, we had to seek our night's shelter at a small wayside wine-shop, a hundred feet or so above the river. It was nearly nine o'clock before we got our table spread in the roadway, before the inn, and ate our supper by the light of a home candle (an indispensable requirement) which burned without a flicker in the still summer air. A stream of water gushed out of the rock opposite, providing a delicious drink, besides musical accompaniment—and we felt happy, notwithstanding the mosquitoes and the inevitable odours.

# CHAPTER X

## THE THIBETAN BORDER

FULIN—Chien Chang Valley—Tung River—Coffins promised before Starting—Shih Ta Kai's Mistake—His Army's Destruction—Szechuan saved from Tai-pings—No Ponies!—Vegetation—Damage done by Rains—Cataracts of Stones—Dragons' Eggs not destroyed—Pack-Mule killed on the Spot—River of Purple Mud—Steep Rock Staircase—Pleasant Resting-place—Mud River — Thinking of turning back—Twenty Bags—Crossing a Stream in Spate—Girls gathering Wax—Pony and Mule at last—Dangerous Washout—Itu : old Frontier City—Gorgeous Inn.

*August* 31.—After our long ninety *li* of yesterday and the drawback of making a start in heavy rain, all our bedding and packages having to be carefully enveloped in oiled paper, it was nearly seven before we were under way. The ascent was very steep, but the land on either side richly cultivated and the path well shaded by the *tung*, orange and other fruit trees. Crossing the narrow summit, we descended on the other side by very rough rock-hewn steps, covered with slippery red mud, down which it was wonderful how our laden coolies made their way at all—until at nine, after passing some rich suburban gardens, we trudged into the long wide main street of the notable frontier town and wide distributing centre, Fulin. The rich valley in which it stands and its comparatively large transit trade combine to make Fulin one of the most prosperous towns in China. The shops were good, the people well dressed, and even the *wa-warh* (children) not uncivil. We enjoyed a good breakfast here in a clean, much-frequented tea-shop and sent

out to hire ponies, as the weather was too hot for walking. Fulin stands on the banks of the Liu-sha Ho, "Flowing Sand River," well named, as it is a broad, shallow stream of liquid red mud and sand, in character not unlike the Platte river below Denver, in Colorado. This curious-looking stream, wide and shallow, falls into the deep, narrow and pellucid Tung a couple of miles below the city; and beyond the Tung, to the west, lies Thibet. To the south is a cleft in the mountains giving access to the renowned Chienchang valley, Marco Polo's "Ciandu," through which runs the fortified highway—the Lolos on one side and the Menia tribes on the other, which connects Western Szechuan with Tali Fu, the western capital of the province of Yunnan. Here we have a narrow strip of richly cultivated land, running 150 miles north and south, occupied by peaceable Chinese agriculturists and soldier colonists, hemmed in on either side by wild aborigines leading a pastoral life, and to whom the timid prosperous Chinaman affords a natural prey. Petty warfare *à la Chinoise* appears to be constantly going on here, and our soldier coolie tells us how, five years ago, his General's wife was carried off and held captive two years before she was ransomed and returned, he says, unhurt. The men whom they kidnap, if able-bodied, are made to work at what little agriculture they care to pursue, and, if past work, are left to starve. This Chienchang valley is additionally famous as the breeding-place of the wax insect, whence the larvæ are transported annually by running couriers, travelling only by night, to their rearing homes on the ash trees round Kiating. That delightful explorer Baber, who, coming from the north-west, traversed Fulin at right angles to our course, thus describes the Tung river at this spot:—

A mile or so further (beyond Fulin) we came upon the Ta-tu river, at this point 2200 feet above the sea level, running in a very rapid stream, about 180 yards broad. The Liu-sha enters it through a wide shingle flat, not much less than a square mile in extent. The main river sweeps in a grand curve from beneath a line of precipices 3000 feet above its waters, and after clearing the shingle, plunges

into a narrow gorge and makes its way eastward, past bluffs which ultimately rise, at Mount Wa, to not much less than the height of the Suicides' Cliff of Mount Omi.

The Ta-tu, or to adopt its more general name, the Tung, should be regarded as the main upper stream of the Min river, since it brings down a much greater volume of water than either of the two confluents which join it near Kiating. At Luting bridge, one of the narrowest points, its breadth is a little under one hundred yards, but it is not navigable above Tz'tati; even below that town there are so many rapids and obstructions that the waterway is little used. Between Fulin and Sha Ping it is only practicable for the whole distance for timber rafts, which are floated down to Kiating for sale: but the danger of the transit is so imminent that the owners of the timber have to bind themselves to provide the raftsmen with coffins in case of fatal accidents. Below Sha Ping there is no difficulty. A wilder or more broken region than that which borders the Tung can scarcely be conceived. There are few reaches which are not overhung by bare cliffs, often of immense height; and yet here and there, in nooks between the mountain spurs, lie small cultivated glens which are models of secluded and tranquil beauty. In such spots opium grows to great excellence; the flowers are mostly red, though the Chinese poppy in other districts is generally white. Nothing relieves the monotony of grey crags so gaily as a field of red and purple poppies. Wantung is a favourable instance of such dells, but if the traveller turns his back upon the river anywhere near that point and ascends the hills on the right bank, an hour's walk will carry him away from cultivation; a day's journey will bring him into the thick pine forests, and after clearing these he may climb for another day, or longer, to the summit of mountains 17,000 feet above the sea. The Thibetan road, *viâ* Ta Chian Lu, crosses this range by a pass which, according to Captain Gill, is 14,500 feet above sea-level.

We, however, did not cross the Ta-tu (Great Ferry) or Tung river at Fulin, which would have landed us in the nondescript region of Chienchang, but kept on our way up the left bank to join the celebrated solitary bridge which spans the torrent at Luting Chiao (bridge). It was across here that an end was put to the audacious invasion of Szechuan by the Taipings in the year 1863, an invasion which, but for the happy accident of

the famous leader Shih Ta-k'ai mistaking the road, would probably have led to the conquest of the province, and so to a totally different conclusion to this formidable and sanguinary contest. The fate of Shih Ta-k'ai's bold incursion into these wild regions is so dramatic, and the chapter of accidents that so often upsets the best-made military calculations so striking that, now we are on the very spot, I cannot forbear quoting a condensed extract from the official report contained in the memoirs of Lo Ping Chang, Governor-General of Szechuan, of which Baber has given us a translation and of which he remarks :—

The main facts are unquestionably authentic, but the story is, of course, written from the Imperial point of view, which regards all opponents as bandits and miscreants, who can hardly hope to escape condign vengeance.

It is therefore vain to expect from it any trustworthy indication of the plan of campaign which guided Shih Ta-k'ai in making these extraordinary detours, or any faithful account of the causes which brought about so complete a disaster; but from inquiry along his line of route I am satisfied that the explanation is not far to seek. The cause of his action was his inability to cross the Yangtze at or near Suifu. The neighbourhood of the Hêng river is a barren region of rocks and ravines, which his large force must very soon have "eaten up." Leaving out of the question the Imperialist statement, which does not deserve much credit, of his defeat in that district, it is evident that his supplies must soon have failed, and that he could not have long maintained his position. Under such circumstances a sudden march upon Ch'êng Tu by Hu Li Chou and Chien Cheng offered several advantages. It would at the outside have the appearance of an acceptance of defeat and of a retreat into Yunnan, thus putting the Imperialists off their guard; it would be a march through an undefended district, and by the sudden return up the Chiench'ang Valley, Yachow would be surprised, and the approaches to the capital of the province and its fertile plain carried without much difficulty. The superfluous and less efficient part of the rebel forces was therefore sent on an expedition into Kuiechou, and, with the view of drawing off the Imperial troops, Lai's command was ordered to advance through Chien-ch'ang.

Curiously enough, it was the very inactivity and unreadiness of the provincial government which defeated these promising tactics. Lai's division, so far from drawing off Imperialist attention, took the Governor-General by surprise, and passed through almost without molestation. So unimpeded was their march that I heard of cases where the main body turned back deliberately to avenge insignificant attacks upon stragglers in their rear. Not until Lai had entered Chienchang did the Governor-General surmise that his capital was exposed to be taken in reverse by such a movement. The dispositions described in his memorial were in reality made to stop Lai's passage, but came all too late for that purpose, though in the nick of time to prevent Shih Ta-k'ai's advance, which was quite unexpected. It was then only necessary to close the pass (about two yards wide) which leads from Luku to Yuehsi, thus forcing Shih Ta-k'ai's army to ascend the main valley, at that point alluringly broad and easy, to Min Ning Hsien, and so to become gradually involved in the inextricable gorges which border the Tung. If the river could be held, the rebel force must then inevitably perish from mere starvation.

Only a personal knowledge of the country and of the tribes which inhabit it could have enabled the rebel chief to foresee these dangers. He was utterly ignorant of such details. He probably expected that the Lolos and Sifans would join him or remain neutral, or, as is more likely, with the usual conceit of the Chinese, who esteem themselves the only fighting people in the world, made little account of their opposition. But it is certain that all the credit of his crushing defeat and surrender is due to these hill tribes, who fought purely for their own hand, and, with their exact knowledge of the local defiles and approaches, easily cut off the rebel supplies, and then made short work of the blockaded starvelings. In the Governor-General's memorial, cannon, musketry and rockets play a conspicuous part; but from all I could learn from the natives the battles were mostly conducted with such primeval artillery as bows and arrows, stones, rocks, and tree-trunks.

In January 1863, after having been routed in a series of engagements on the Hêng river (the stream which enters the Yangtze on its right bank between Sui-fu (Suchow) and P'ingshan), Shih Ta-k'ai, the most ferocious and crafty of the rebel kings, formed his troops into three divisions, one of which he sent from Fukuan-ts'un into the province of Kueichou. (With this division we are not further concerned.)

His lieutenant, Lai Yuh-sin, was despatched into Chien Ch'ang with the second division, Shih Ta-k'ai himself intending to follow with the main body. Lai's corps of 30,000 or 40,000 men accordingly marched to Hui Li Chou (by what route does not appear), and thence to Tê Ch'ang, where a great many recruits were gained among the opium porters and disorderly characters of the neighbourhood. They reached Ning Yuan Fu on March 16, but were defeated next day, with a loss of 2000, by an Imperialist force. Still pressing on, they made an unsuccessful assault upon Mien Shan on the 21st, and were again worsted at Yueh Hsi T'ing, losing their leader, Lai Yu-hsin, who was killed by a Lolo with a stone. Hurrying forward in great disorder, they crossed the T'ung on the 26th, and continued onwards by Ching Ch'ihsien and Jung Ching Hsien into T'ien Ch'uan country, through which they passed into Northern Szechuan.

(There they seem to have dispersed, whether of their own intent, or in consequence of repeated attacks, is not clear; but it is fairly certain that a large proportion made off into Shensi and Kansu.)

Shih Ta-k'ai, "careless of distance or danger, and always on the watch for an opening," had sent forward this division to divert attention from his own movements, expecting, it was presumed, that the Imperialist forces would follow in hot pursuit, without looking to their rear or concerning themselves with the possible advance of a second rebel corps. The Governor-General, Lo Ping-chang, however, foresaw the design, and made dispositions to frustrate it. In his memorial on the subject he remarks that "the importance of occupying all the approaches from Chien Ch'ang became evident. The Tung river, the natural protection of the south-western frontier, rising in the country of the Tien Ch'uan tribes, runs through the Yüt'ung region, past the Wassu Ravine and Luting Bridge, into the Lêng Pien * and Shên Pien districts, traverses the magistrature of Ching Ch'i, and then enters the Lolo territory. We had, therefore, to guard the line from An

* *Lêng Pien* and *Shên Pien* are Tu-ssu districts, respectively north and south of Hualin Ping. Shen Ping contains very few aborigines. Yüt'ung is a tribe of the Tung valley, a little above Wassukou.

Ch'ing Pa* to Wan Kung, a length of more than 200 *li*, including thirteen ferries, exposed to an advance both by the Yueh Hsi road and the track *viâ* Mien Ning Hsien. And besides this, it was indispensable to hold the line from Luting Bridge to Wan Kung, since there are many places at which the rebels might have crossed the Tung, supposing them to have previously passed the Sung Lin affluent; a wide flanking movement in that direction would have enabled them to gain the T'ien Ch'uan country."

A detachment was accordingly sent, under Tang Yu-keng, to act between Anch'ing Pa and Wan Kung; and Wang, chief of a thousand families in the Sunglin district, was directed to keep the Sunglin affluent with his aboriginal forces, with a view to prevent a turning movement upon Luting Bridge and Hua Ling Ping. Another detachment was stationed in reserve between Hua Ling Ping and Wassu Ravine; and, lastly, a corps was posted at Mo Sin Mien to stop any advance upon Ta Chien Lu.

Lai's band had by this time escaped into Shensi. After measures had been taken to cut off their return, the Lolo chief Ling was directed to occupy the Yueh Hsi passes, so as to prevent Shih Ta-k'ai from entering the Lolo territory. Presents were at the same time distributed among Ling's Lolos and the aboriginal troops of "Thousand Family" Wang to encourage and stimulate their zeal.

T'ang Yu-kêng's force reached the Tung on May 12, Shih Ta-k'ai having in the meanwhile crossed the Upper Yangtze at Liang-Pa, entered Chien-Ch'ang, and found the Yueh Hsi main road blocked, took the alternative route by Mien Ning Hsien, and so descended on the 15th, with 30,000 or 40,000 men, upon the village of Tzu Ta Ti, in the district governed by "Thousand Family" Wang, at the confluence of the Sung Lin with the Tung. During the night both streams rose several yards in consequence of heavy rain, rendering the passage dangerous, and the rebels began to construct rafts. They made a reconnaisance of the crossing on the 17th, and on the 21st sent down a party 4000 or 5000 strong, carrying "several tens" of boats and bamboo rafts, upon each of which "several tens" of the

* An Ch'ing Pa is a fertile plateau and village on the left bank of the Tung, opposite Tsztati, two or three miles inland. Wan Kung is an insignificant hamlet a few miles east of the ferry below Fulin.

most desperate embarked as a forlorn hope, covered by shields, and advanced to force the crossing. The whole army came out of their huts to support them from the bank, and cheered them on with howls which echoed down the gorges like peals of thunder. Our men, however, stood fast; and when the enemy had reached mid-channel opened a steady fire, which killed several chiefs in red uniform and exploded a powder magazine on one of the rafts, hurling the rebels pell-mell into the water. A few rafts which had been carried away by the current were followed up from the bank and sunk, and not a soul of the attacking party escaped alive.

Nevertheless, during the following night the rebels again reconnoitred the crossing, and appear to have satisfied themselves that it could not be carried. Thenceforward they confined their efforts to the passage of the Sunglin affluent, with the object of gaining Lu Ting Bridge and invading the Tien Ch'uan region; but they were repulsed time after time by "Thousand Family" Wang, and lost several thousand men in the attempt.

On May 24 Ling, coming up with his Lolos from Yueh Hsi, fell upon the rear of the rebels near Hsin Ch'ang, and after repeated attacks captured their camp on Saddle Hill* on the night of the 19th. From that moment the rebel case became hopeless. After a futile attempt to gain over the native chiefs Wang and Ling, Shih Ta-k'ai, furious at finding himself involved in a situation from which escape was impossible, slaughtered 200 local guides as a sacrifice to his banners, and on the night of June 3 attempted to force the passage of the main river and of the affluent simultaneously. Both assaults were again repulsed. After killing and eating their horses, the rebels, now reduced to the last extremity of famine, were allaying their hunger by chewing the leaves of trees. Nevertheless, on June 9 they made another general attack upon the crossings, but all their rafts were either sunk or carried away down the swift current.

The end had come. "Thousand Family" Wang, reinforced by the Mo Sin Mien detachment, passed the Sunglin on June 11, and assaulted the rebel quarters at Tsz Ta Tis. At the same time the Lolo auxiliaries, coming down from Saddle Hill, advanced upon the rear of the position, which was thus completely enveloped. Thou-

* Saddle Hill (Ma Ngan Shan) is an eminence on the right bank of the Tung, a short distance below Tzu Tati. The village of Hsin Ch'ang lies on its western slope.

sands of the insurgents were killed in the actual attack, but all the approaches to the place being commanded by precipices and confined by defiles, the fugitives became huddled together in a dense mass, upon which the regulars kept up a storm of musketry and artillery, while the Lolos occupying the heights cast down rocks and trunks of trees, which crushed them into the river. More than 10,000 corpses floated away down the Tung.

Shih Ta-k'ai, with 7000 to 8000 followers, escaped to Lao Wa Hsuan, where he was closely beset by the Lolos. Five of his wives and concubines, with two children, joined hands and threw themselves into the river; and many of his officers followed their example. As it was indispensable to capture him alive, a flag was set up at Hsi Ma Ku* displaying the words "Surrender, and save your lives," and on the 13th he came into the camp, leading his child, four years of age, by the hand, and gave himself up with his chief and followers. Some 4000 persons who had been forcibly compelled to join him were liberated, but the remaining 2000, all inveterate and determined rebels, were taken to Ta Shu Pu, where, on June 18, Government troops having been sent across the river for the purpose, a signal was given with rocket, and they were surrounded and despatched. Shih Ta-k'ai and three others were conveyed to Ch-êng Tu on the 25th, and put to death by the slicing process. The child was reserved until the age prescribed by regulation for the treatment of such cases.

Those of us who remember the atrocities committed by the Taiping rebels around Shanghai in 1860 and the devastation of the Yangtze valley, and almost total annihilation of its flourishing populations in that and the following years, until the rebellion was finally crushed by the capture of Nankin in 1864, will not be sorry that Shih Ta-k'ai's bold march met with the result it did, and that the fair land of Szechuan was happily spared from the devastation that overwhelmed six of the other provinces, and those the richest of the eighteen which compose the empire. News is so long in travelling through this huge, invertebrate, inarticulate empire, and is so vague and indefinite when it does transpire, that it is not to be wondered at that the particulars of

* Hsi Ma Ku lies on the Lao Wa River, some seven miles south of Lao Wa Hsuan.

this narrow escape from Taiping domination were hardly known in Shanghai until years after the rebellion had been finally suppressed. The historical interest of this great movement, analogous in its long duration and in its devastating effects, to the Thirty Years War in Germany, will never fail to attract students of human progress in this quarter of the globe; nor is the wonderful way in which the lapse of one generation has almost effaced the traces of the calamity in the provinces ravaged less remarkable. Justice is seldom done to the Chinese, in appreciating their present condition, by bearing in mind the tremendous set-back government and people then suffered, and what a fearful waste of life and property has since had to be made good.

Here in Fulin we were again exposed to disappointment; having met and passed so many porters all the way along, all carrying goods to Fulin, we had conceived a great idea of its importance, and thought there could be no difficulty about getting ponies there. But neither love nor money could obtain them, and nothing was left but to go on again afoot as before. The path led up through a very rich, almost level valley bounded on both sides by high mountains, through which meandered the red turbid waters of the Liusha, its bed nearly a mile wide. Paddy-fields filched from the river bed and laboriously walled round with shingle packed in long wicker-work baskets, like Brobdignagian sausages in shape, occupied the lower ground and ran up the side of the alley by each entering stream. Walled-in gardens of orange trees, with fields of maize, sugar-cane, peanuts, and cotton, filled the lower slopes: beyond these, groves of mulberry and varnish trees, and above all the jungle of dwarf oak, pine, and flowering shrubs which, in populated districts, is never permitted to grow up into decent-sized trees, being remorselessly mown down for firing by lads who carry a sickle in their hands and a pannier for the croppings they collect on their backs. The path was a paved one, but the many ravines proved serious impediments to our progress, and it was intensely hot, the mid-day sun shining in full force, with scarcely

a breath of air moving, so that we began to regret having ever quitted the cool mountain tops. The late heavy rains which we had experienced on Mount Omi and on the Washan, seemed to have fallen with intense violence in this valley, and each ravine that lay in our path was filled with an avalanche of rough angular fragments of all sizes, rolled down from the mountain peaks above. Ponds of sticky red mud lay in the interstices, and a dozen streamlets had to be forded in each ravine. The destruction had been too recent for any repairs to have been made to the road, and we now began to realise why no one would hire out any animals. We had always scorned before the usual information that the roads were impassable, and so, apparently, our servants had in this instance withheld the real reason. Several of our coolies slipped off the natural stepping stones which alone afforded a comparatively dry path, and our major-domo himself got in up to his waist in red mud and had to be hauled out, losing his shoes, which he afterwards replaced by straw sandals. It took us half the day to get over the fifteen *li*, so-called, to the pleasing, picturesque town of Lung Tung, ("Dragon's Cave") where we took tiffin in a nice cool restaurant, a row of fine shade trees screening it from the glare of the river. Here we were able to hire three ponies for our two selves and our "boy," for the thirty *li* that remained to us of this day's journey, for the sum of one hundred and sixty cash apiece (five pence) and set out again in high feather. But the road was frightfully bad. The mountain tops looked in many places as though their highest peaks had been rent by a volcanic explosion, bursting the walls of their craters and sending forth avalanches of stones and angular rock fragments, spreading out often at the foot of the peak into a cataract half a mile to a mile in width, of course destroying all the fields it had overflowed. No wonder the Chinese attribute these outbursts and sudden spates to the escape of a dragon from its lair; it is difficult one's self to explain how water alone can, apparently, cause on the top of a mountain, eruptions of such violence. In China all natural calamities are piously attributed to the wickedness of the people

and the shortcomings of the officials who, as is well known, never shrink from attributing such misfortunes to their own misdeeds in their reports to the Throne. Our boy informed us in the present instance that the dragon lays its eggs on the mountain tops, and that, further, over such a spot the snow never lies, so that, if only the officials would exercise due vigilance, they could trace these spots in the winter and have the eggs destroyed. Anyway, whatever the cause, the result, utterly disastrous to the farmer, is exceedingly inconvenient to the traveller. Crossing one of these ravines on our little sure-footed ponies, we narrowly escaped a serious accident. We were in company with a train of pack-mules; we had descended one side of a ravine a couple of hundred or more feet deep, and were cautiously threading our way up the recently made narrow slanting track that led up the almost vertical slope on the opposite side, when the new-made ground began to move in a spot my companion had happily passed over in safety. I whipped up my pony, and he nimbly scrambled over on to the safe ground, but a mule immediately behind me went rolling down, over and over, with the shifting shale which composed the wall of the ravine, and was instantly killed by falling on his back on the rocks at the bottom. I was thankful I was riding a pony and not a mule, as these latter invariably lose heart in a difficulty and do not respond to the call of their rider as does a high-spirited little pony.

The muleteers had to set to and remake the road before the rest of their train could proceed. The path wound up and down, with the wide river of liquid purple mud still on our left, and steep conical mountains on our right. The rainfall must be enormous on these mountains, as we see from the series of great and sudden freshets that occur each summer in the Yangtze. Another marvel is that, with the annual recurrence of these freshets, and the masses of soil they displace, there should be any mountains left by this time.

We quitted the Fulin valley by an extraordinarily steep staircase, the steps cut out of the solid rock—almost as high

and steep as those of the great Pyramid, which it is marvellous that the pack animals can surmount at all—and entered the valley of Han Yuen, in the chên or chief town of which we were to spend the night. This place lies 1500 feet above Fulin, in an equally rich though less tropical valley, the fields running up the back of the sandstone strata, smooth, and tilted at an angle of about thirty degrees, admitting of easy cultivation. On the opposite side of the river rugged limestone mountains, with granite peaks behind, towering to the clouds, rose almost vertically. It was well before sunset as we rode our tired animals up the steps that formed the main street of the bright mountain town, and put up at the spacious, clean, fresh-painted inn of "Constant Affluence," finding ourselves 3767 feet above sea level, and in the not uncomfortable temperature of 80° Fahrenheit.

*September* 1.—Set out at six on foot by a path gently ascending the valley, the mud river still on our left; found it warm walking in the still sunshine, and were not sorry when the first twenty *li* came to an end and we sat down to a frugal breakfast of fried corn-cake and honey at the village of Ho Sho Sze, so named after the "Guard River Temple" at its entrance. Here we were told that at the town of Fu Chu, five *li* further, we should certainly be able to hire ponies, and so walked gaily on. We found Fu Chu Chang a most pleasant place to rest in from the sun; the broad path between the river and the long single row of houses, that made up a town chiefly composed of inns and tea—or rather wine—houses, was shaded by fine trees weighed down by over-luxuriant creepers. Under these sat women with stalls of rice, blanc-mange, and other light refreshments, from one of whom we gratefully accepted a drink of deliciously cool water dipped from a pipkin at her side. We waited a long time, but again no ponies were obtainable, and we had to walk on. We now quitted the Sha Ho valley and turned up a narrow ravine to our right, scrambling along the steep right bank of a clear-water torrent entering from the north; on the opposite bank reddish cliffs, with

steep barren hills above. The air was still, and the sun beat hot off the rocks, so that we were glad to stop at two o'clock at the clean hamlet of Iwan Shui for tiffin, after which we took a *siesta* on the grass under the trees, while our men went searching for animals. They came back *re infectâ*, and we determined to push on to Pan Chiu Ngai (precipice), which there was just time to reach before sunset. We crossed more stony ravines, forded a torrent of very cold water, the bridge over which had been carried away in the night, traversed another valley of angular rocks, a mile in extent, with streams of red mud flowing among them and into the main river, and amongst which our laden coolies floundered painfully—our boy again coming to condign grief. The prospect, however, as the setting sun threw the rough valley into shade, and lit up the red mountain tops on our right (the serene-looking progenitors of the avalanche at our feet), was wildly romantic—an uncanny spot in which to be benighted, a contingency with which at one time the interminable rocks, which we were forced to scramble over, seemed seriously to threaten us. At last we extricated ourselves from this valley of the shadow of death, and a short steep ascent brought us to a welcome inn situated at the top of a high cliff overhanging the river, our back affording a fine view of the opposite mountains. With five stages still before us to Ta Chien Lu over such tiring ground, we were seriously contemplating turning back here and crossing over to Ching Chi Hsien, two easy stages distant, and there joining the main Thibetan road, where both chairs and ponies should be obtainable—especially as, shortly after sunset, a mule train turned back to the inn and informed us that the road beyond was absolutely impassable. However, there was a very fine mule in the inn, and the landlord, a hale old man of eighty years, but almost quite deaf, promised to hire it us for the next stage, if we liked to try it, so we went to bed happy and tired.

*September* 2.—In the morning, after we were packed up, and twenty "Norfolk Howards"—by the tale—had been extracted

from my pillow, we found the son of the house reproving his grandfather for letting out the mule in such roads, and we reluctantly had to give it up while sending our men on in advance to report on the road and endeavour to procure animals. Meanwhile we determined to stay where we were, not sorry for the excuse of half a day's rest. We climbed down to the banks of the river, the bed of which is here about 100 yards wide, for a bath, and found it considerably swollen by the night's rain, but we soon discovered a quiet backwater in which to disport ourselves. The valley seemed practically unpeopled, and we enjoyed the luxury of being alone. Presently, however, a party of men appeared intent upon fording the stream, which they ultimately succeeded in doing, but it was a lengthy and somewhat dangerous business. Tying their scanty clothing round their heads, four men set out hand in hand carefully wading through the foaming waters; arrived at the deepest part, half a dozen strokes landed them again in wading depth on the other side, but not before they had been carried a quarter of a mile in all down river. The two stronger, who were evidently picked men with a thorough knowledge of the channel then recrossed and so gradually conveyed the whole of the party over. We felt somewhat anxious as we watched them, as the river was nothing but a succession of waterfalls and rapids, and although a fair swimmer myself I should never have dared to attempt it. The sun now came out warm, and we were glad to return to our inn and recline under the trees that embowered the little village. We here watched girls gathering the coating of insect wax off a kind of camellia tree and, examining the wax, found it full of small chrysalises underneath. By noon our men returned with a sorry mule and a diminutive pony of about ten hands, so after tiffin we proceeded on our way; the road lined with small white daturas, while pomegranates were exposed on the wayside stalls. We crossed four dangerous washouts, over which we had to dismount and let our animals, surefooted as they were, be carefully led; crossed a small level valley, composed of huge angular detritus floating apparently in a sea of red mud,

inundating land which had once been paddy-fields, and at sunset entered the important frontier town of Itu.

Two miles below the town, which is picturesquely situated on a high bluff, there is an opening in the wall of mountains opposite, through which the river we had been ascending, and which the town overlooked, receives its chief affluent. It is approached by an uncomfortable paved roadway of big round boulders, the same as here form the hedges of the maize fields to protect them from the ravages of the wild boar. This leads up through an archway and under one of those unique, and, for grace, matchless Chinese three-storied pavilions, into the wide main street of the little town. Over the arch are cut four large characters, once gilded, "Li Chow Hsi Chai," meaning, "Western fortress (lit. stockade) of the region of "Li" or "Black-haired." Here, not so long ago, was one of the outposts of the Chinese against the Mantse, as the pastoral Thibetan tribes hereabouts are still called, whom the encroaching Chinese agriculturists are still steadily driving farther and farther west; much as the North American Indians were pushed back by the colonising white man. We had ascended another 2000 feet and were now once more in a pleasant temperature, being some 5000 feet above sea level. Our inn was a spacious building, with several conrtyards, gorgeously painted and gilded, and was kept by a *chüjen*, or B.A., whose wife, with several lady friends, came to visit us after supper and prolonged their stay until we had to ask them to leave and allow us to retire for the night.

# CHAPTER XI

## ROUND THE SNOWY RANGE INTO THIBET

FEI Yue Pass—Brick-Tea Carriers—Phœnix Flat—Tung River again — Cascade of Rocks — Buddha's Ear Precipice — Boundary between China and Thibet—Seven Waterfalls uniting—Frontier Town—Flowers by River Path—Luting Bridge—Men stationed to help Travellers across Bridge — Granite Mountains — Thibetan Villages—Thibetans—Letters to Dead Relations—Thibetan Names—Bullock Hide Coracle—Vertical Granite Wall—Tiled Temple Village —Tung now known as Golden Stream—Tarchendo Ravine—Thibetan Suspension Bridges—Arrival at Ta Chien Lu—Buttered Tea and Beef Steak.

*September* 3.—Heavy showers all night, and having a long day's journey before us, started at six in heavy rain up a slippery, muddy ascent of 1000 feet, 15 *li*, to breakfast at a clean mountain hamlet called Kao Ch'iao, or "High bridge." The river flowed deep down below in a limestone gorge scarcely ten yards wide. As we looked back down on the prosperous-seeming town of Itu, we could see that its site was a plateau of red sandstone which here, as elsewhere, and especially at Hanchên, which we had traversed the day before, overlies the limestone. The strata appeared to run in the direction most usual in Szechuan, viz., N.E. and S.W., dipping N.W. at an angle of about 30°. Thirty-five *li* of continuous ascent, at last up an uninhabited grassy glen, the green hills on either side hidden in clouds, the bottom carpeted with an extraordinary profusion of wild flowers, and traversed by a small stream of ice-cold water. We tiffined at an isolated cottage, enjoying a drink from the cool spring opposite, and then commenced another

of those tiresome zigzag ascents in the clouds, over the Fei Yue Pass ("Fly beyond"), 9400 feet, beyond which lies the vale of Hualin and the Tung river. It was impossible to enjoy our usual tiffin, as the poor people where we halted at one o'clock had neither wood nor charcoal. We at last reached the summit dripping wet, the gap being enclosed by a ruinous guardhouse, partly unroofed, in which was an old man, the only survivor of the military guard once stationed here, whom we found crouching over a wood fire, whose warmth we were glad to share for a time while we boiled our thermometer, almost blinded by the wood-smoke. We made the height 9400 feet. We met very few people, only some brick-tea carriers—men, women, and children—the men carrying fifteen or sixteen mats of fifteen catties* each, and boys of ten or twelve three or four such mats. At about every 200 or 300 yards they stop and rest their loads on a crutch which they carry in their hands for the purpose, while they scrape the perspiration off their dripping bodies with a wisp of bamboo, worn as a bracelet. They make five or six miles a day over such ground as this, and are the most pitiful-looking objects one can conceive. The women, though in rags, had the healthy rosy complexions common to mountaineers, and wore broad white turbans. We met, however, few women, but many children. We now descended rapidly by a like path on the other side, and as soon as we got below the clouds enjoyed a wide view over the picturesque and finely wooded valley in which stands the imposing scarped plateau of Hua Ling Ping, well named "Phœnix Flat." A limpid torrent flows at the foot of its cliffs, and at the junction of the valley with a ravine opposite, through which flows an affluent in a narrow limestone gorge, stands a most elegant and beautifully situated monastery, surrounded by magnificent trees, and with a fine forest running up the mountain side at its back, the whole forming one of those exquisite wide pictures which are the despair of the photographer. On our way the whole steep valley was, like so many others in this region, cut out of red sandstone, alternating with

* A catty = 1⅓ lbs.

strata of white limestone. Hua Ling Ping stands upon a flat-topped, quadrangular cliff, the walls, as is often the case in Chinese mountain towns, carried out to the edge and forming a crown to the cliff. We entered into a broad street, parade ground, or market-place—we did not find out which—and then turned off into the narrow main street, where we put up at a plain unpretentious, but perfectly comfortable inn. We had made 75 mountain *li*, and had descended to 7000 feet. Here we met our first Lama, in a gown of old gold, covered by a cloak of crimson felt, and realised that we were now really on the Thibetan border.

*September* 4.—The houses here are roofed with loose planks weighted with stones, so that it probably can blow here in winter, still as the air generally is in summer. Off in the cool morning, with the thermometer at 60°, down a very steep crumbling path of loose shale, upon which it was not easy to keep one's footing. The path was very narrow, very steep, of crumbling shale, and broken up by landslides in all directions—down 2500 feet, along, sometimes high above, sometimes close alongside of, the ruddy, ever widening stream, and on to its junction with the mighty Tung, which we reached again after a fortnight's absence. We are now little over 4000 feet above the sea—we last stood on the banks of the Tung at Kin Kou Ho, 1700 feet above the sea; thus the Tung falls 2500 feet in about 100 miles. A road cut in the cliffs which line its banks would give an easy, gradual ascent instead of the three high passes of over 9000 feet, besides innumerable lesser ones, which we have come over. We crossed the many channels of the wide delta of the stream—two or three square miles of big red, white and green boulders, a mile or so above the town of Shêng Chên, perched on a high flat composed of rocky *detritus* in the angle formed by the left bank of the Tung and that of its affluent. One of the customary temporary rickety bridges, formed of a couple of young fir-trees, propped on a pile of boulders at each end, rendered the main channel just passable; our pony was driven into the torrent by the men and urged to scramble through with shouts

and missiles, thoroughly soaking the Chinese saddle and saddle-cloth, which they had neglected to remove. On reaching the opposite bank, a steep ascent of about 200 feet landed us on the top of a cliff overlooking the Tung, up the left bank of which our course now lay. The Tung here was a rushing body of milky, semi-transparent water, fully 100 yards wide, and, I should judge, 20 feet deep, and flowing with a seven-knot current. The narrow path follows the edge of the cliff overhanging the torrent, and as the animals usually carry packs, they have a habit of bearing away from the inside wall and walking on the extreme edge, which is appalling until one at last gets confidence in their sure-footedness. We made a hasty tiffin by the wayside, being anxious not to travel such roads by dusk, when, upon rounding a dangerous corner, high up above the river, a most extraordinary sight met our astonished gaze. The corner we had rounded formed the edge of a sort of recess, apparently scooped out by the river in the mountain side, about 200 feet back, and in a spot where the usual hard rock gave place to softer shale. A huge whirlpool filled the foot of the recess which it was now occupied in enlarging; but its waste was being replaced by a steady fall of rock from above. For at the back of the recess a "mud" fall tumbled over the cliff, here, perhaps, a thousand feet high, bringing down with it a constant stream of rocks which bounded over the narrow footway and thence down the lower slope with a splash into the boiling river. We sat down on the rock at the corner and watched the spectacle entranced. We had been foretold all sorts of impossible dangers, especially since the heavy rains, not excepting the famous Luting suspension bridge, the alleged fear of which led one of our Chung King chair-coolies to give up the journey; but we were not prepared for running the gauntlet of such a cannonade as this. So we sat down and gazed. Is it possible, we said, that this phenomenon is constant, and, if so, how is the supply kept up? Never having seen anything of the kind in our previous experience of mountainous countries, we should much have liked to climb up the mountain side, had it been possible, and thoroughly investigated the source of this extra-

ordinary stream which flowed on so steadily with a calm persistence that entirely fascinated our gaze. But, unfortunately, we were not explorers in the real sense of the term, and could not afford to loiter by the way and miss our daily stages. Presently some coolies came along, and we watched with intense interest to see how they would proceed. The path was not a foot wide, and, in fact, only retained as a path at all by the traffic over it, by which a way was trodden in the shaly slope as fast as it dribbled away. A big rock lined the inside of the track on one side of the fall, and under the lee of this the men crouched, watched for an exceptionally heavy shower, and then, when this was over, made a bolt for it. This manœuvre was methodically repeated by each individual, who was greeted by the laughter of his companions as he successfully ran the gauntlet. The stones were all angular, and varied in size from that of a walnut to a pumpkin, while the great height from which they fell rendered them doubly dangerous. We sat nearly an hour watching before we made up our minds to venture on, and should certainly not have then had the courage to do so had we not seen the natives pass with impunity. So we went on and stood under the sheltering rock on the very edge of this novel cascade. The muddy, stone-laden stream made a loud, rattling, grating noise as it carried the smaller stones along with it in its hurried course: the larger rock fragments came bounding down in huge leaps as they crashed by. Waiting for a bigger mass than usual to go by, the run was made, and we all got safely over. It was literally a rock cascade, for there was very little water in the stream, and that quite shallow. Our pony jumped across without any difficulty, but our invaluable watch-dog, Jack, got panic-struck as he felt the ground moving under his feet, and crouched down. I was behind, and so able to catch him up and save him from a watery or even worse demise.

This curious spot is known as "Feuer Ngai" or "Buddha's Ear Precipice." A small temple is niched into the rocks at one corner of the recess, where the pious people solicit protection,

every natural phenomenon being supposed to be in charge of a local deity. Thus we find shrines cut out of the rock at nearly every rapid in the many rivers of Szechuan, to which the passing boatmen seldom fail to pay their devotions: if lives are lost notwithstanding, as often happens, it is a case of divine retribution, in the infallible action of which no people believe more firmly than do the Chinese.

The Tung river, says Baber, forms the true geopraphical and ethnographical boundary between China and Thibet, and so we practically found it to be at the present day, although later we discovered several purely Thibetan villages on the hither side of the river; still Tung River undoubtedly demarcates the geographical division, that original inorganic boundary which lies at the base of all other organic distinctions. Further on, while rounding a high cliff, we had a view, on the opposite shore, of a pair of parallel rivers issuing from the mountains on the right bank of the Tung, their channels separated at the mouths by a flat-topped, wall-sided terrace of angular rock fragments, cemented together by yellow loam, upon which stood a few scattered trees and farm buildings. Baber suggests that these dividing terraces of the many parallel rivers in these parts may be the medial moraines of ancient glaciers. These rivers issued, further back, from deep-cut ravines which converged from the recesses of the cloud-capped mountains beyond: they were discharging each a considerable volume of water through wide rock-strewn deltas, and probably had their sources in the snowfields of the lofty peaks which we skirted, or rather which the ravine pierced, by which two days later we ascended to Ta Chien Lu. Further back we had passed a spot where seven waterfalls issuing from the mountain side united their streams in one of the many swollen torrents which go to feed the capacious Tung. It is this abundance of water displayed in every possible form that adds so greatly to the beauty and interest of this romantic region.

We now left the cliffs and went down by a steep path which led along the bank, being just edged in between the torrent and

the rock-wall, covered with flowering shrubs, on our right. The river was here absolutely unnavigable, even for rafts, being not unlike, in appearance, to the rapids of the Niagara river below the falls, though of lesser volume. At length the valley opened out, farmsteads and gardens re-appeared, and we found ourselves in the suburbs of the important frontier town of Lu Ting Chiao, or "Luting Bridge." We shortly after entered the busy main street and, just before dark, ensconced ourselves in a large, dirty, crowded inn. The town was crowded with porters and travellers from Ta Chien Lu and beyond, all waiting for more settled weather and the temporary repair of the almost impassable road we had just managed to traverse. We had to put up with a tumble-down shanty propped on piles and overhanging the torrent, whose roaring waters were visible from our window, through which we looked on to the steep mountains on the Thibetan shore.

It would be difficult to describe the tranquil beauty of the winding path along the banks of the Tung by which we entered Lu Ting Chiao. The flora to-day also was remarkably fine, mostly purple in colour, while on the Washan the prevailing shade was blue. We specially noticed a convolvulus with small dark-purple flowers, garlanding cassia trees and everything near it in prodigal profusion: also a large pink convolvulus and several varieties of snapdragon, generally yellow with red spots; besides numerous *In Keo Hua* trees, covered with coral-red flowers. We also passed trees with berries of the size of hawthorn berries, one kind red with black spots, the other of a brilliant yellow, both edible and pleasing to the taste. Intensely blue forget-me-nots, quantities of golden rod, prince's feather (crimson and green, of a very large size, grown for seed), many kinds of white flowers, and a coral-pink vetch, further brightened the landscape. Among the trees were palms, prickly pears, mulberry, loquats, walnut and pomegranate. We also passed many handsome, spacious and elaborately carved sepulchres: we noticed more than one coal seam among the exposed nearly vertical strata of shales, into some of which burrows had been driven.

Lu Ting Chiao owes its importance, as its name denotes, to its bridge, the sole one existing across the Tung River. Indeed, excepting insignificant bridges built high up near the sources of its chief affluents, it is the only bridge that crosses the waters of the many great rivers that go to form the great river, the Ta Kiang, that has its mouth at Shanghai, two thousand miles below. Up till the year when the present bridge was completed, the chief road from China to Thibet passed through Kokonor in the north, both banks of the Tung River being at that time in possession of the hostile Thibetans or Mantse tribes, as they were, and are still, designated by the Chinese. The Tung is passable by ferries only at favourable seasons when the current is moderated. One of these still functions near Fulin and another formerly existed at this spot. But in the reign of the great Emperor Kang Hi, whose individual energy seems, for the duration of his long reign, to have transfused itself into the veins of his usually apathetic Chinese subjects, the greatest exertions were made to conquer and pacify the borders, and so communications were opened and maintained, if only to facilitate military movements. The bridge is a suspension one, but, like so many things Chinese, of rudimentary construction. The roadway rests directly on the chains instead of being suspended from them. Hence the necessity of a low trajectory, to attain which the chains have to be stretched as tightly as possible; and, instead of being hung from towers, as with us, they are simply stretched across from the level of the bank or roadway on either side, and are brought as near the horizontal as it is absolutely possible for a suspended chain to swing. The marvel is that the Chinese, or anybody else for that matter, ever succeeded in stretching the chains as taut as they are; for the bridge (according to Kang Hi's inscription) is 311 Chinese feet long, which agrees with my own measurements of 125 big paces. The bridge is made of nine parallel chains, and is nine Chinese feet wide; the chains are formed of iron links each about ten inches long and nearly an inch in thickness, and are not stayed at all; on them, or rather transversely across, are laid small planks of

pine, not attached to the chains in any way but quite loose and shifting about with the traffic, leaving many gaps through which the sight of the roaring torrent below may well shake the nerves of the novice. The bridge sways considerably laterally, but otherwise, to one who has his sea legs, offers no real difficulty. Men are stationed at either end who assist the timid (for a consideration), but we fortunately had no need to employ them. It is marvellous how horses are got to go on it for the first time. Our pony, who was an old stager, required considerable persuasion to get him on to it, and no wonder, for once he slipped his foot through between the boards. A drop into the river here would mean certain drowning. At either end is a handsome pavilion and an *octroi* station for the brick tea which is the principal article of merchandise that crosses, and in the pavilion on the Luting side is a big tablet of limestone with a long inscription describing the erection. The bridge was erected in the 39th to 41st year of Kang Hi (1701-3), and has now stood nearly two hundred years without any repair, and no wonder the Chinese are proud of the marvel to which thirteen provinces, it is said, contributed each a chain, and which it took (so the inscription tells us) three years to build. The two side chains on either hand complete the thirteen. Upon the Thibetan shore and under a detached pavilion corresponding to that in Luting is an arch with four large characters cut deep in relief, which translated are:—"Iron strength, Empire benevolence." Besides the likin collected on tea, this is the only bridge I have yet met with in the Empire where a toll (it is true almost infinitesimal) is collected upon all goods and passengers traversing it.

A small dirty village, chiefly inns for the brick-tea porters, adjoins the west shore, emerging from which we passed along a narrow picturesque path cut out of the foot of the hills, which here again fall almost vertically into the water, and found ourselves at last upon the granite mountains of Thibet, ascending the right bank of the Tung and in the direction of the road for Ta Chien Lu.

We are within two days journey of Ta Chien Lu, and our road leads round the base of the high range, called Ta Shueh Shan, or "Great Snow Mountains," behind which and between it and the great Thibetan plateau the town is situated. This lofty mountain mass is bounded on the east by the Tung River and on the north by the Tarchendo stream which, flowing down from the Thibetan plateau, enters the Tung at the hamlet of Wa Sze Kou, our destination for the night. The path, following up the banks of the two streams, skirts the base of the range which falls almost sheer into the water; here in steep slopes, leaving scant space for occasional patches of cultivation, there in grand precipices whose crests had to be surmounted by the most breakneck paths we had yet had to face. The scenery was of the wildest description, grand and awe-inspiring, and the limestone chasms we had hitherto traversed seemed in the recollection tame and friendly by comparison. The vast masses of granite, broken up by towering precipices, their summits, from which descended numerous cascades, hidden in the clouds; the steep slopes, guarded by wide stretches of prickly pear and other cacti, all seemed to dwarf human effort and cry halt to further progress, and one could not wonder at the long isolation of China, walled in by such an inaccessible frontier. At times no trace of human habitation was visible, and away from the water not a sound broke the overpowering stillness. We passed, but did not visit, here and there one of the wild-looking Thibetan hamlets perched upon unapproachable declivities, their gaunt, tower-built dwellings crowded close together, but with no signs of life about them, our spy-glass failing to discover even a dog much less a human being. They have a fortress-like appearance, are built of evenly laid rocks, uncemented, with narrow slits for windows, and are surmounted by roofed-in platforms; anything wilder or more forbidding in the shape of a human home it is impossible to conceive, and they are in keeping with the gloomy Thibetan scenery and the still more repulsive religion. The few Chinese hamlets that we passed through by the road-side, with their dirt and noise, but teeming with life

and activity, seemed charming by contrast, and as friendly as the others appeared hostile. Wherever a tiny valley or easier slope renders cultivation practicable, there the more industrious Chinese have pressed in and driven back the aborigines on to the barren mountains. The Thibetan population is dying out in the struggle like the Red Indian before the European; the Chinese villages swarm with children, and the duty of having progeny which seems inborn to the Chinese race, and which is as strongly felt and obeyed as it was and is by the Jews under divine command, is steadily making them masters of all the outlying regions of their vast empire, notwithstanding their effeminate nature. This triumph of peaceful persistence strikes one forcibly when one meets a party of Thibetans on the road, striding along in all the pride of a magnificent *physique*, with their tall, manly, muscular forms, upright carriage, and haughty bearing, and compares them with the bent, overworked coolie and his cramp-footed spouse. A file of Thibetan men and women, migrating with their scanty store of household goods, passed us on the road to-day. They mostly speak some Chinese hereabouts, and we tried to address them, but they kept on without deigning to notice us. We tried to overtake them (and we were in good training by this time), but in vain; they quickly passed out of sight, men and women, without breaking their stride and, as we called after them, they did not even turn back to look at us. There seems to be an air of dignity about the poor Thibetan, the total want of which amongst the same class of Chinese makes them so worrying to the European traveller in their persistent inquisitiveness and utterly insatiable curiosity. The Thibetan is equally, if not more, superstitious, and nothing will induce him to be photographed, but he has not the same dislike and contempt for strangers that the Chinese so unreservedly exhibit and, but for the Lamas, who fear for the domination of their caste, is inclined to welcome travellers and to treat them with hospitality. He is more manly and self-respecting and, at first sight, one cannot imagine this martial race, accustomed to arms from their childhood—hardy hunters

and inured to their terrible climate—being held in subjection by their unwarlike neighbours. It is a striking example of the triumph of mind over matter, and gives hope for the future of Europe which pessimists fear will eventually succumb under the weight of its own culture.

For the last few days, in all the Chinese villages we passed through, the whole population—men and boys alike—were engaged in writing letters, and we noticed them especially addressing the envelopes with careful caligraphy. At first we could not make it out until we remembered it was the mid-seven moon, when deceased relatives have to be provided with funds to carry them over another year in the nether regions. The big envelopes contain voluminous supplies of paper cash, which are ceremoniously burnt, and so conveyed to their addressees. So busy were the people over this important work that they scarcely looked up to notice us, much less did the usually excited small boys attempt to run after us.

The names of places hereabouts are all Thibetan, and the Chinese characters should only be taken as representing the sound. Thus Tachienlu, which successive travellers have interpreted as "Arrow-Forge," is simply the Chinese sound of the Thibetan Tarchendo—the confluence of the streams Tar and Chen; so is "Cha-li," where we breakfasted this morning in a shanty open to a dirty street in the midst of a small flat perched 500 feet above the Tung, in an oasis of maize and millet. The night's heavy rain had apparently changed the previously limpid Tung into a swollen torrent of brown water, which rushed past at our feet in a series of terrific rapids—the fall from Wa Sze Kou to Lu Ting Chiao, a distance of twenty miles, being about 400 feet. At noon the ascent of a lofty cliff brought to view a recess in the mountains leading up to a narrow ravine; on the floor of the recess stood the hamlet of Ta Peng Pa (Embankment) 200 or 300 feet above the river—a Chinese village, in a roomy farm-inn of which we tiffined, in full view of a glorious picture of hill and dale—another oasis of paddy-fields; above these

millet and maize, with an amphitheatre of barren mountains for the background. We noticed here a coracle—bullock-hide stretched over a frame of bamboo, reminding one of those still to be seen on the banks of the Wye, much as used by the ancient Britons in Cæsar's time. An ascent of another lofty cliff, along a path on its extreme edge, which nothing but the fear of ridicule on the part of the pony-boy induced us to traverse without dismounting, at length brought us in view of a crack in the mountain wall on our left, up the ravine formed by which passes the road to Ta Chien Lu, for which and the torrent coming down it there is just room and nothing more. The view was wild and romantic in the extreme. On our right, at the foot of the precipice we were riding over, rolled the flooded Tung, here of the size and volume of the Rhine at Basle, its upward course traceable in the distance, winding like a thread through the valley we were now quitting, a wild pathless region inhabited by scattered remnants of the *Menia* tribe; facing us, and separated from us by a rocky spur, up which our onward path led, a gigantic vertical wall of granite, which formed the left bank of the affluent we were about to ascend, seemed to bar our way and almost threatened to crush us, if we ventured beneath it: on the further bank of the river, to the east, the mountains fell in steep uncultivated slopes sheer into the water, while similar heights bounded our view to the left, and shut out from view the snowy peaks of which they formed the buttress. Crossing the ridge, and quitting the Tung, a rugged precipice path which, but for the scoffs of the aforesaid pony-boy, I should never have dreamed of riding down, the marvellous little beast sliding and slipping on all four feet a great part of the way, deposited us safely, and at the early hour of five, in the Chinese village of Wa Sze Kou, "Tiled Fane Mouth," —*i.e.*, "The village at the mouth (of the gorge) in which is a temple with a tiled roof." Tiles seem rare luxuries in these parts, and hence the occurrence of such names as "Tiled Inn," "Tiled Temple," "Tiled House," frequent enough to make a

conscientious Freemason seeking shelter in this region quite easy in his mind.

Wa Sze Kou is a prosperous-looking village, dependent for its prosperity on the passing tea-trade. It had quite recently, like so many of the hamlets hereabouts, with their roofs of pine planking or shingles, been entirely destroyed by fire; the dozen or more comparatively spacious edifices, chiefly inns, had all just been rebuilt, and the place, in consequence, was abnormally clean. The site is limited, being a small flat squeezed in between the Tachendo river and the mountains, and evidently, from the number of boulders strewn about, liable to be overflowed. Yet many fine trees shaded the outlying houses and their gardens, the whole forming an almost idyllic contrast to the gloomy grandeur behind. Gold was formerly mined in the huge granite precipice across the water, but whether from want of profit or disturbance of the *fungshui*—I could not learn which—the mining had long since been discontinued. We made Wa Sze Kou 4200 feet above the sea; thus the Tung river from this, the highest point of its course touched by us, down to its mouth at Kiating Fu, a distance of about 200 miles, falls 4000 feet: above this point it is no longer known as the Tung, but as the Chin Chuan, or Golden Stream. The maximum to-day was only 65 degrees.

*September* 6.—Wet day. We set out along the level path by the side of the river through the few fields and groves that surround the town, and after half a mile entered the narrow gorge through which the Tarchendo river has forced or found an exit. This vertical-walled zigzag cleft in the granite range which rises on either side far above the line of perpetual snow, is, in appearance, not until the clefts in the calcareous rocks by which the Yangtze river makes its way through the mountain ranges dividing Hu Peh from Szechuan. How far either is due to the action of water is a question still disputed by professional geologists. I venture the plausible conjecture that they are mainly due to aqueous erosion, aided by "faults" in the line of the channel chosen. In any case the action of the

Tar Chen Do stream must be very vigorous; it is a mountain torrent on the colossal scale that characterises all natural phenomena in this the nucleus region of the Asiatic continent. From Ta Chien Lu to Wa Sze Kou, a distance of under twenty miles, the fall is 3500 feet, being little short of 200 feet to the mile; yet the rise is so steady that in our morning's walk from Wa Sze Kou we, but for the evidence of the stream by our side, should scarcely have realised that we were going up hill at all. The torrents carry a vast body of water and, at the time of our visit, we should judge, supplied fully half the volume of the Tung river. We tried to form an estimate of its volume by noting its dimensions at a spot where it was confined between two vertical rock-walls, thirty yards apart. We estimated its mean depth here at ten feet, and, assuming a velocity of eight miles per hour, or thirteen feet per second, we have here a volume of 4000 cubic feet per second, which is more than double the quantity discharged into the sea by the Thames, the biggest river in Britain. The work of erosion of which such a stream is capable must be a measurable quantity even in the course of a single year; but, seeing how granite disintegrates by the action of water, and is not cut clean by it, as we see has been done in the limestone and sandstone lower down, we cannot but think these stupendous precipices of granite must be due originally to other forces; nor is there anything like the regularity in the cliffs here that strikes one so forcibly in the gorges of the Ya and Yangtze rivers. Be this as it may, it was a grand walk following up this noble torrent of foaming blue water to its origin, and an unceasing source of interest to us every step of the way. The constant succession of rapids and falls, and the great volume of water compressed into such narrow compass, made of it an exceptionally fascinating companion, giving life to the gloomy and forbidding defile; and, as we had but a short day's journey before us, we were able to enjoy and leisurely to realise the ineffaceable impression it made upon us. Its banks were lined with evergreen thickets, in one of which we put up a chamois. It is crossed, as we

saw, in two places only, by Thibetan rope bridges, and in these spots the stream was from 30 to 40 feet wide, and still a roaring rapid absolutely unfordable. The water is said to be mainly the produce of melting snow, but if this be so, its beautiful transparency is all the more remarkable.

We stopped for breakfast at eight o'clock at a tumble-down Chinese hamlet called Jihti, a collection of cheap inns for the brick-tea porters, where nothing was obtainable but rough *paoku* (maize), *pa-pa* (damper), and very cheap samshoo or corn-brandy. Ten miles of a very rough path, chiefly over slippery rocks sticking up out of a slimy, orange-coloured clay, brought us to the end of the gorge proper, and at a spot where a side ravine enters the valley and affords a small triangle of available ground, we behold the village of Shengkan, surrounded by trees and small patches of maize and potato. Here we were told that the glacier at the head of the ravine was visible in clear weather, but to-day the ravine, as well as the valley we were in, was shrouded in a mysterious veil of mist, and, but that we had seen them with our own eyes from the summits of Mount Omi and the Washan, we should never have imagined that we were walking between peaks, on either hand of us, of a minimum height of 17,000 feet, the snow-line in latitude 30° N.; nor did the temperature of 66°, which we recorded at to-day's mid-day meal, suggest the fact that we were in the midst of a snowy range and ourselves already 6000 feet above sea level.

The valley now opened out somewhat, giving room for the assiduous Chinese to introduce more cultivation, small patches of barley, maize, buckwheat, and a very inferior tobacco. In the widest spots the valley was, perhaps, 100 to 200 yards across, the ground behind rising in steep slopes, hardly accessible even to the indefatigable Chinese woodcutters. Our approach to the city was now announced by the road passing through and under a ruinous but picturesque pavilion, a gilt inscription upon which informed us that it was erected by the Wu Shu Cha Shang, or five guilds trading in tea, to the Ching Kuan Kung, the official in charge of the *octroi*, upon his giving up office some

ten years before. Not far from this the second of the two Thibetan suspension bridges spans the river. We had read many descriptions of these bridges, and had never been able to gather from them how they were really worked, while the illustrations of them in Gill's and other books of travel in this region are so grotesquely incorrect, that we are tempted to try one more description. The bank here was not a foot above the water; on the opposite shore it was quite steep and apparently only serviceable for the growth of jungle, which the Chinese cut down green, stow in a basket hung from the shoulders on their backs, dry, and take to the villages to sell for fuel. The bridge consists of a single rope stretched over two crossed stakes and tied down to a rock on the ground behind; this particular bridge started from a height of 5 feet from the ground and rose on the opposite side to a height of perhaps 30; hence in crossing from this side, a man (or woman, for we saw both make use of it) has to haul himself against gravity, while on the return journey, when he is laden with fuel or produce, he has gravity to assist him. On the rope is slung, by a half-cylinder of stout bamboo a foot long, which slides freely on the top of the rope, a small batten of wood which serves for a seat; this batten is attached to the bamboo traveller by a line 2 feet long tied round the centre of the batten upon which the passenger sits with the line passing up between his knees, holding on by his hands to the bamboo traveller. With his whole weight suspended from this slip of bamboo he starts down the line, and, when the impetus is exhausted, hauls himself up hand over hand on the other side. It requires some nerve to risk one's self upon a "chair" so frail as this is, with a raging torrent almost touching one's feet, a slip into which would be certain death. But women and novices can be assisted by a friend on the further bank, and with this object a guide line runs underneath the rope, attached to it and suspended from it by a series of light bamboo rings which also slide on the main rope. By means of this a traveller can be hauled along and is able to devote his whole attention to his seat and the bamboo slide, by which he holds on,

and which moves along with him. Produce can also be hauled across without any passenger, and later on, at Ta Chien Lu, we saw unsavoury buckets of the ever-present Chinese fertiliser being hauled across to the narrow fields on the farther side of the "Tar." Of course, on the main Thibetan road, which is supposed to be practicable for Sedan chairs and beasts of burden, the rivers are crossed by suspension bridges proper or by ferries, but a traveller frequenting the byways, especially in the border country, will have to learn to use those bridges or abandon his journey.

We had ascended a low intervening ridge by a few rough huge rock steps, and, on reaching the top, at about four o'clock, there lay the goal of our voyage, Ta Chien Lu, with its curved roofs and guilded pinnacles, surrounded by a mediæval wall, most romantically situated at a point where the valley bifurcates, walled in by gigantic and extraordinarily steep mountains, and roofed over by a dark cloud layer, which enveloped all the surrounding summits. A descent to a small boulder-strewn flat, in which were visible a few vegetable gardens, but no houses, concealed the city from view, but again, upon rounding a spur of the mountain on our left, which ran down into the water, the wild-looking city, with its crenelated battlements and old-world pavilions surmounting the gates, stood immediately before us. There was no suburb outside the gate, and the surroundings looked desolate and forbidding, but once inside the low gateway, we were soon beset by a crowd, and had a longer delay than was agreeable, while explaining our apparition and the object of our journey to the guard. At last we got off and seemed to ride on indefinitely until, after having been fairly puzzled to find our way, we arrived at an inn which turned out to be that invariably occupied by the rare European visitors to this remote place. We had traversed the whole main street of the city—narrow, dirty, and crowded—Chinese in short; but the almost serried crowd that thronged the exiguous passage was totally un-Chinese, and at once fascinated us by its novelty and picturesque variety. Strange,

wild figures, draped in loose mantles of felt and rough woollen cloth, with high felt boots gaudily decorated, some on foot, others on horseback, long-haired, handsome, brilliant brunette faces, formed the bulk of the passers-by. There were many Chinese among the shopkeepers in the shops, but the general effect was Thibetan. The puzzled, antipathetic stare of the stolid Chinaman had given place to the pleased, friendly look of the lively Mantse and his smiling wife. What a relief to be in a country where the women are natural and pleasant to look upon, and not where, as in China and India, the poor creatures are brought up to believe it is a sin to cast a glance at a stranger. Many of the Thibetans are mounted on splendid mules and ponies, gaily caparisoned. The streets were so crowded that we began to wonder whether we should ever get through, or when our journey would end, when, at length, we turned into a courtyard, in which mules and ponies were tethered; we mounted a rickety staircase leading up into a gallery similar to one of those surrounding the yards of the old London inns, and were allotted tolerably spacious quarters under the attic-like roof. A smart young lady, her hair, ears, neck and hands covered with jewellery, handed us a bowl of buttered tea each, and we realised that we had left China and were now really in Thibet. As to the buttered tea, though it had the colour and consistency of the most delicious chocolate, in flavour it was slightly deficient; it had a *goût fade*, without the slightest taste of tea; but its warmth was refreshing, and, in this cold country, the butter forms the most valuable constituent of the drink: what virtue there is in the tea, which is composed of dried twigs pounded up with a few big brown autumn leaves, it is difficult to imagine. By the Thibetan, however, it is the most prized commodity he imports, without which life would be unendurable. The agreeable novelty of a fine beefsteak for supper completed our satisfaction with our new surroundings.

# CHAPTER XII

## TA CHIEN LU; ITS LAMAS, DOGS, AND PONIES

THE Three Valleys of Ta Chien Lu—European Pollution of Water—Thibetan Tusze, or Prince—Orientalism—Rupees—Brick-Tea Warehouse Inns—Yaks—Lamaserai—Prayer Banners—Tsatse—Lamas set their Dogs at Photographer—Human Skulls as Ornaments—Prayer Slates—Carnios—No Prayer Wheels to be sold—*Om Mane Padme Hum*—Thibetan Dignity—Batang—Changed Boundaries—Cold Wind off Glaciers—Roman Catholic Fathers—Variety of Tribes—Beauty of Features—Furs—Excellent Market—Beautiful Pictures—Gloomy Defile—Treasure Mules in Charge of Mandarin—Gold Mining—Another Attempt to cross Tung—Sure-footed Pony—Prickly Pears—Drought—Deforestation.

*September* 7.—Ta Chien Lu, or Tarchendo, as the natives call the place, stands 8400 feet above the sea-level, in a deep depression, squeezed in between the lofty barrier range and the high rolling expanse of the Great Central Asian plateau. It occupies the bottom of a confined hollow, walled in by practicably inaccessible mountains, in which three valleys meet: two of these bring down the streams "Tar" and "Chen" from their sources in the snowy peaks behind, while the third carries down their joint contribution to the sea by way of the narrow defile leading past Waszekou to the Tung river. The larger stream flows right through the centre of the town, affording an unfailing supply of limpid water, in the shape of a foaming torrent whose roaring, but for our being so tired, would have kept us awake the night long. If this magnificent water-power is not made use of, as it would be in Europe, either for cleaning the town or for manufactures, we

have at least the consolation of seeing that its fair surface bears no scum, and that its bosom is not polluted by sewage as are so many streams in so-called civilised countries. Curious that the pollution of water, which is a sin against religion nearly throughout all Asia, should be a matter of sublime indifference in "enlightened" Europe and especially in England, where the barbarous misuse of water seems to go back to the Middle Ages, as one may see, for instance, at Canterbury, where the monks placed their solidly constructed latrines over the running stream. Of course, in China it is less the cleanly instincts of the people than the value of the *excreta* as a fertiliser to which the delightful purity of the streams and rivers everywhere is due. (Within three miles of Chungking, the town refuse, carried out by coolies in buckets, is worth a shilling a picul,* and the mountains, with their scanty soil, could not be cultivated without it.) The stream is spanned in the town by two roofed-in plank bridges, across which a delicious cold breeze blows on the stillest summer day.

The town and district are under the government of a native *Tusze*, or Prince, assisted by a Chinese resident: his palace, with its gilded roof, is one of the most conspicuous ornaments of the place. Adjoining it is a large lamaserai, a two-storied range of buildings surrounding a wide courtyard, a gallery running round, leading to rooms inhabited by the Lamas, the woodwork painted in gaudy colours, in a style more Indian than Chinese. China proper has an essentially distinctive mark about its art products, houses, furniture, and dress, which is not Oriental in the common acceptation of the term, and it is not till one gets to the border regions that Orientalism, as commonly understood, reappears. This strikes one forcibly in Peking, where the Mongolian element gives a colour and variety to the civilisation which makes a study of its street traffic so fascinating to the traveller; the long strings of stately camels, the ruddy-faced Mongols and yellow-coated Lamas all mark a change from the monotony of Chinese life.

* A picul = 133⅓lbs.

So here in Ta Chien Lu, although we are far from the boundary of the eighteen provinces, as depicted on the maps, yet the atmosphere is truly Oriental, and the numerous races represented give an endless variety to the picture. Since the abandonment of the Kokonor route, owing to its greater natural difficulties, as also in consequence of the long disturbances on the north-west frontier, the Ta Chien Lu road is practically the sole way of communication between China proper and its vast dependencies in Thibet, all the traffic passing through this gully. Hence Ta Chien Lu is a cheerful, busy place, and as, at the time of our visit, the brick-tea trade was at its height, and as it is here that the precious product is transferred from human to animal porterage, for which it has to be repacked in skins, the town was overcrowded, and trafficking and bartering were going on between the Chinese and representatives of varied Thibetan tribes from far and near. The natives bring skins, wool, gold and musk; taking in exchange cloth, calico, hardware, tobacco, and "notions." Much of the trade is done by barter, but rupees circulate freely, and indeed form the sole currency of the region. All our payments were made in this coin, with a supply of which we had to furnish ourselves immediately on arrival, exchanging for them our pure Chungking sycee, weight for weight, at a Chinese banker's. We had first met with rupees at Tatien-chih, eight days east of Tachienlu, in the shape of ornaments worn by the women. A very useful, loosely woven, woollen cloth which the Chinese inhabitants of the cold mountainous country to the east made up into jackets, and were wearing, as we passed through, even in August, is eagerly bought by the Chinese; sufficient for a *kuatse*, or jacket, being procurable here for a shilling. The tea is hardly an article of local trade; it is a strict monopoly of the Lamas, who derive their chief income from it, storing it up in their lamaserais and retailing out this necessary of life to the poor Thibetans at exorbitant prices. We entered one of the spacious warehouse-inns, a range of two-storied buildings with galleries surrounding a square

courtyard, stored full of brick tea, which men and women were engaged repacking in bullock hides preparatory to loading it upon yaks, droves of which were penned in the inn yards awaiting their loads. This interesting animal, who rejoices in the cold, and can tread a path through the deepest snow, is a long woolly-haired ox with bushy tail, short legs and long thick body. They were all in fine condition after coming off their summer pasture on the mountains and, like their drovers, looked the picture of health and strength.

Ta Chien Lu further boasts a number of Chinese Buddhist temples, unlike those of the Lamas, freely open to the sightseer, but mostly dirty and neglected, though, as usual, lavishly decorated. Outside the South Gate, and about a mile distant along the main Thibetan road, stands a magnificent lamaserai, surrounded by finer trees than any we had come across in a journey right through China. They were a kind of alder, called *pehyang*, and were really beautiful specimens, having been allowed to grow to their full natural size, unmolested by the Chinese fuel gatherers. A similar grove adorns the banks of the Chen river outside the North Gate. Our road to the lamaserai led us along the bank of the Tar, which we crossed by a stone bridge and then followed up its left shore by a rough stony path, until, passing through the grove of noble trees which line the bank, we reached the gate of the main buildings, first traversing a wide lawn of fine turf. The building is in the form of a quadrangle and is two-storied; the lower story presents a blank wall to the road, but the second story is lit by a row of gaily painted windows, from the sills of which depended long narrow boxes full of brilliant orange blossoms of a kind of aster called in Chinese "Thibetan brightness." These are the homes of the monks, looking gay and cheerful as an undergraduate's rooms, in striking contrast to the gloom that seemed to hang over the interior. Outside the gate stood spacious sheds with tiled roofs, heaped up with innumerable miniature terra-cotta pagodas, covered with Buddhas, which, with the prayer

banners fluttering gaily in the breeze, are the accumulated offerings of worshippers, known in Tibetan as Tsatse.

Entering through a deep archway, we reached the inner courtyard. Immediately facing us was the lofty, richly decorated Buddhist temple, with its golden cupola; on either side of it, and round the other three sides of the vast and highly decorated quadrangle, red, green and yellow with many prayer staves, were the dwellings of the monks, of whom several hundreds are said to inhabit this lamaserai, though many are temporarily absent on business or pleasure. We found few people about, and walked up the steps on to the lower verandah and looked into some of the rooms, each of which had a shrine and was comfortably furnished with bed, work-table, and chairs. In some, tea or food was being prepared, and the few young Lamas we saw looked cheerful and occupied, and took little notice of us. Meanwhile a few older Lamas had silently gathered in the courtyard, to which we returned with the view of asking them to open and show us the temple. They stood in statuesque attitude with their red felt toga-shaped gowns gracefully draped over their bodies, leaving the right arm bare. Such a picture was worth photographing, and we quickly got the camera set up. Just as we had happily taken the picture, however, the big Thibetan dogs, one or two of which had sniffed at us upon entering, but had not seriously troubled us, rushed upon my wife—and seized the alpenstock with which she was trying to ward them off in their teeth. We shouted to the Lamas and made signs to them to call their dogs off, but they assumed an impassive stare and neither spoke nor moved. This reinforcement of dogs had evidently been purposely let loose, and for the moment our position was alarming. But with the aid of our Chungking coolie, who stood by us manfully, we managed to keep them at bay with our sticks, and to effect a safe retreat, carrying off our guns (the camera, and its stand). We tried vainly to open up a conversation with a younger Lama who followed us out through the gate, but he either did not understand Chinese or else would not venture to have any

intercourse with us. So here, as previously in the smaller lamaserai within the walls, we were disappointed in our endeavour to pierce the mysteries of a Thibetan shrine. Two human skulls forming the crowning ornament in the richest part of the temple roof gave us, however, an idea of the gloomy nature of Thibetan Buddhism, which is terribly repulsive in contrast to the mild and benignant Buddhism of China proper. Yet the temples of the poorer country are by far the richer and brighter of the two, which fact accords with the more devout superstition of the Thibetan people. On our way back we noticed two poor Thibetans clad in a single loose garment of sheepskin, each laden with a heavy slab of slate, a rough parallelogram, three feet by two, and half an inch thick. Upon each was engraved, in delicately cut and most ornamental Thibetan, what we were told was the phrase "*Om mane padme hum*," repeated over and over again. The whole surface of the slate was thus covered. These slabs were carefully deposited upon a huge heap of similar irregular fragments of slate and limestone, which formed a pile by the roadway twenty feet by six, and five feet high. We ventured to revenge ourselves on the Lamas by abstracting, unseen, two of the most portable slabs, and trust that the diminution of the pile of several thousand stones brought no harm on anybody. We spent the rest of our time in bargaining in the inn for Thibetan curios, but were not very successful; extravagant prices were demanded for what most people call rubbish, and no price would tempt any of the Thibetans who crowded round us to part with the prayer wheel which nearly every one carried in his hand, nor with the amulet, a prayer written on paper, which was worn round the neck in an elaborately worked and bejewelled silver casket. But if bargaining with Thibetans was a trial to one's patience, the handsome faces of the men and the merry laughter of the women were a constant pleasure. In Ta Chien Lu are gathered at this season specimens from all the surrounding and from many distant tribes, and they vary a good deal in appearance. As far as we could learn, the strikingly handsome men (whom we

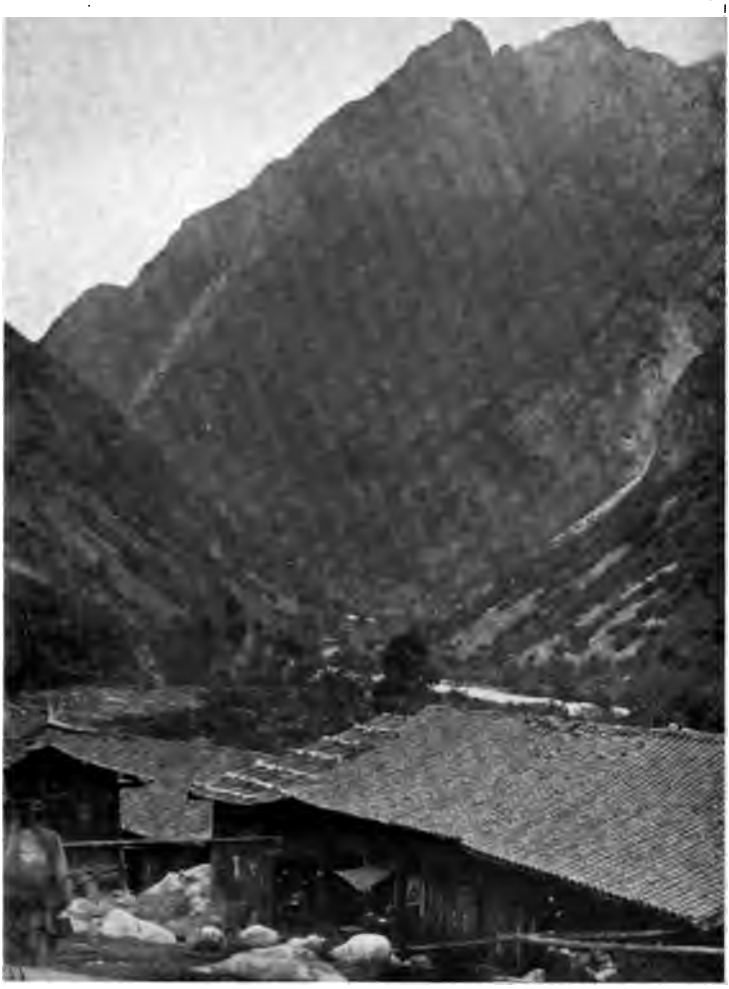
vainly begged to be photographed) belonged to the Menia tribe. They all wear long black hair, unplaited and uncombed, in curls over their faces, and in very large chignons behind tricked out with jewels; while the women of Ta Chien Lu wore their hair plaited in two long plaits in coronets over the head, a very becoming style. The Thibetans appear to be always praying, and the words "*Om mane padme hum*" are ceaselessly repeated. Long before dawn we were awakened by the devotions of the men residing on the ground floor below us, who prayed incessantly in a monotonous sing-song voice. There is a wonderful dignity about the poor Thibetans, in striking contrast to the ill-bred pushing manners of the lower classes of Chinese which make them such a nuisance to the traveller. At bottom, the reason doubtless is the absurd contempt the Chinese entertain towards all foreigners, whom they look upon as a sort of wild animals whom they stare at and handle much as children do the wild beasts in a zoological gardens. The Thibetans regard us as equals, and if it were not for the oppression of the Lamas, and the fear that these latter entertain, and justly, that the influx of Europeans would destroy their hold over the people, I believe Thibet, as far as the people are concerned, would be as pleasant and easy a country to travel in as any in Europe. What is hard to explain is that such a fine athletic race, all trained to the use of arms from childhood, should be held in subjection by such a rabble as the Chinese usually appear, both soldiers and people. Another remarkable fact is that the Chinese have not disarmed these conquered races, as we in like cases have done with the tribes on the Indian border who have been brought under our sway. The Thibetans all carry arms, while to a Chinaman their use is abhorrent, and even the soldiers are most imperfectly provided with weapons, always ill kept, and are rarely seen with them. Truly it would seem to be a case of moral, or perhaps rather intellectual, supremacy.

*Thursday, September* 8.—The land of Bod, or Bodyul, as the country is termed by the natives, is really under Chinese rule as far west as Batang only, a little over 100 miles as the

crow flies, but eighteen days journey of high mountain passes. Batang is situated on the Upper Yangtze river, here called the Kin-sha ("Gold-sand") and the country included in its valley, up to the crest of the hills beyond, lies under the authority of the Viceroy at Chêng Tu, and hence is marked on the recent maps as one with the province of Szechuan, with which, of course, apart from this fact, it has nothing whatever in common. The old Jesuit maps more correctly trace the western boundary of the province at Ta Chien Lu. But one advantage the traveller derives from the change is that a passport for the province of Szechuan enables him to demand the right to travel as far as Batang, a right not always acknowledged. Beyond Batang, however, begins the direct rule of the Lhassa monks, and, as we know, into the province of Lhassa no European traveller can at present penetrate; and, in reality, the Chinese have no power there, although they keep a resident there, the Ambah. The Chinese maintain a few hundred soldiers along the highway from Ta Chien Lu to Batang as an escort for their officials and a protection to caravans, but the people are all ruled by their native chiefs, or *Tusze*. The *Tusze* or *Wang* of Ta Chien Lu stands under the orders of the military governor of the district, who holds the rank of Futai. Except from the likin on the brick tea imported from Yachow, the Chinese Government derive little profit from their conquest otherwise than in surrounding themselves with a ring of practically subsidised buffer States, which has ever been a cherished object of Chinese policy. Indeed, the cost of occupying this barren country is defrayed by the wealthy province of Szechuan: in the Wa Sze Kou defile we had passed a string of forty laden mules conveying boxes of treasure destined for the pay of the Thibetan garrisons. The *Tusze*, or native princes, have, however, to maintain and provide, in case of need, a native militia, taking their orders from the Chinese governor; and so, after the loose but not unpractical Chinese fashion, order is maintained and travel is comparatively safe, neither of which conditions can be said to prevail in the

Thibetan regions outside the immediate jurisdiction of the Chinese. There the different tribes are constantly raiding, and a travelling caravan is entirely dependent for its safety upon its numbers and the efficiency of its armament. Thus, for us, beyond the trouble of the needful preparations, there was nothing, at least as far as the next pass west, beyond which no Chinese woman may proceed, to prevent our making an excursion of two days journey beyond the border city, and gaining a little experience of genuine Thibetan travel during the four days which we had allotted to Ta Chien Lu. But, most unfortunately, through want of sufficient clothing and a non-appreciation of the fact that we were entirely surrounded by snow and glaciers, I had a severe attack of neuralgia, and was laid up during nearly the whole of our stay, and so saw no more of the surrounding country than was visible from our confined valleys. The first day I had been strolling about trusting to the warm sun, and had failed to protect myself against the icy wind that set in at sunset and blew through the numerous crannies in the walls of our apartment. We vainly tried to stop them up, and the charcoal brazier in the room only made them worse by contrast.

It was a satisfaction to hear afterwards from the good Fathers at the Catholic Mission that this was the fate of all the strangers whom they had known come there, and that all the travellers who had passed through from Thibet, though seemingly inured to the hardships of the plateau, had succumbed to what they termed the exceptionally unhealthy conditions of the valley. An account of Ta Chien Lu without mentioning this mission, which is the most interesting object there to all Thibetan wanderers, would be like leaving Hamlet out of the play. The cordial welcome given to foreign travellers, whatever their nationality, has been told of in enthusiastic terms over and over again in the successive books of travel that have been written about this region. Nearly all, and we must include ourselves in this category, have run short of funds on arriving here, and, but for the timely help of the Fathers, might have



The Confined Valley of Ta Chien Lu.

been in great straits. The mission has two establishments at Ta Chien Lu, one outside the south and one outside the north gate of the city; the titular Bishop of Thibet also resides here, being unable to take up his post as long as no arrangement is come to with the truculent Lamas,* the reduction of whose despotic and misused power would be a work of true philanthropy. But the great delight of meeting the Fathers here is in the opportunity of once more being able to hold converse with well-informed men of education, after having for days talked to people from whom one can only extract a modicum of information by the most pertinacious system of cross-examination—men, too, who think you have some sinister object in invading their country and wanting to find out about things which should not concern you. The Fathers seem to be stationed here on the frontier, patiently awaiting coming developments, doing what they can in Ta Chien Lu and its neighbourhood meanwhile. They expect that either Russia or England will force the opening of the country, and were much disappointed that the late Sikkim encounter led to no result. At that time an advance to Lhassa would in all probability have been a mere military promenade, as the Thibetan people are friendly disposed towards Europeans and the Lamas were thoroughly cowed. It remains to be seen what will be the result of the present negotiations at Darjeeling, in which it is to be feared the wily Chinese will, as usual, outwit us. It is sincerely to be hoped that the country will be opened, and that through foreign intercourse this fine people may be gradually relieved from the grinding oppression of the Lamas; much material gain from so poor a country can hardly be anticipated.

*September* 9.—Spent most of the day bargaining for worthless "curios," which, however, gave us an opportunity of observing the numerous types of Thibetans (all classed,

* This has since been effected by the perseverance and determination of M. Haas, the very capable and energetic French Consul, and the Roman Catholic Fathers are once more free to return to their old quarters in the Interior of Thibet.

including ourselves, by the Chinese under the simple name of *Mantse*, or savages), and thus, notwithstanding we were disappointed in not being able to penetrate further west, we enjoyed at Ta Chien Lu the advantage of seeing natives from a wide range of the surrounding country, to visit whose homes would have necessitated a prolonged expedition. We could not learn much, owing to our inability to converse with them, and as our Chinese interpreters would take no interest in our questions we did not get far. We were again struck by the beauty of the features of some of the younger men, and by the erect and manly carriage of all, while the few women we saw were most attractive, notwithstanding their dirt. We bought sheepskin jackets, made up by local Chinese tailors, without lining, for six rupees apiece—(Lama heads, as these are locally called, the crown on her Majesty's head being taken for a priest's coiffure), and all our coolies delightedly supplied themselves with these cheap winter clothes, borrowing the money from us. Splendid hoods of scarlet cloth, bound with handsome sable skins, completed our outfit. We took a walk up the steep, grassy slope of the mountain outside the north gate, glad to warm ourselves in the bright sunshine, and caught a view of the glaciers and snowfields opposite, but the mountain tops were everlastingly enveloped in impenetrable mist. Perhaps if we had only bought our furs immediately on arrival, and so had avoided getting ill, we might have attempted to penetrate them, but although on the day of our arrival we noticed the people were mostly wearing sheepskin jackets, the sun was so warm that we could not realise the need of them. Ta Chien Lu has a most excellent market, containing all the European needs, the produce of the pastoral Thibetan, as well as the vegetables and the dainties of the agricultural Chinese, and our supper this evening of spiced mutton, potatoes, cabbage, and native cheese left nothing to be desired.

During our four days stay the temperature ranged from 50° to 76° in the shade.

*September* 10.—The time has now come when, sadly and

reluctantly, we have to turn round from this most interesting and delightful westward journey, and retrace our steps homewards. An early breakfast of parched barley (*tsamba*) mush, and delicious fresh milk and raspberries prepared us for the short twenty-mile ride down stream to Wa Sze Kou. After trying several ponies offered for hire on the previous day, we eventually picked out the smallest of the lot, a little four-year-old stallion, a bay, four black legs, black mane and tail down to the ground in fine condition, standing eleven and a quarter hands, altogether one of the most perfect specimens of horse-flesh in miniature one could wish to see. He was very skittish and lively, but good-tempered, and apparently (which we afterwards proved him to be) quite free from vice. He tried to run away with A., who first mounted him outside the east gate, by which we had entered the city, but the ascent of a steep, rocky ridge, such as one would think it impossible for a horse to walk up, much less gallop, soon brought him to his senses. We hired him for twelve rupees for the eight stages to Ya Chou Fu, at which point we proposed to descend the Ya river to Kiating by a raft. We turned round outside the gate for a last farewell to the friendly town, a beautiful picture with its background of mountains just being illuminated by the rising sun, and the thought of having to leave it, probably for ever, made us, for the first time this journey, really melancholy. The march down the gloomy, winding defile, with its 3500 feet descent, up and down rock heaps, fording swollen streams from the glaciers on our right, across fearsome bridges composed of two or three rough fir trees lashed together, the pony being driven into the torrent to scramble his own way over among the boulders, with the ever-roaring accompaniment of the full Tar Chen Do river on our left, brought us without further incident to our former clean hostelry at Wa Sze Kou in time for a late dinner at 4 P.M. We were more fortunate in the weather than at the time of our ascent, for on passing the side glen which enters the Wa Sze Kou defile at Shen Kang at ten o'clock, we got a narrow glimpse of the towering snow

peaks which form the barrier wall between Ta Chien Lu and China. We met another string of twenty-four mules laden with treasure, the *weiyuan*, or official deputy in charge, riding in a four-bearer Sedan chair, with eight coolies in front attached to ropes with which to haul the chair up the many perpendicular bits of the rock-strewn trail, the "great man," of course, never dismounting however difficult the obstruction. How do these effeminate people manage to rule manly races like the Thibetans and the warlike Mongols? The abominable condition of the roads in China, or rather their almost absolute non-existence, is doubtless largely due to the fact that any track is good enough which a mandarin can get over in a Sedan chair, and the patient, muscular coolies will get a Sedan chair over almost any track that a goat can traverse, while, of course, compared with the tremendous burdens they carry at other times, a Sedan chair is to them a plaything. The military code forbids military officials to make use of chairs, but on my travels I never remember to have met a military officer riding in a Sedan. And these are the people whom Lord Wolseley designates as the coming world-conquerors. Perhaps the raw material is there in the masses, should they ever be organised by Russia, or by any European power, but never under their native leaders!

Wa Sze Kou felt delightfully warm after Ta Chien Lu, and quite cured us of our chills, although it is still nearly 5000 feet above sea-level; and we sat on a bench outside the inn and enjoyed the effect of a beautiful sunset upon the surrounding mountains. Facing us, and separated only by the wide, rushing torrent, stood the huge granite cliff that forms the right-hand portal of the defile. In its face are the traces of old tunnels made for gold-mining, now forbidden; and what a glorious water-power is here running to waste, which, in the ever-receding future, when China is to be "opened up," will doubtless one day make the wild valley hideous with the noise of quartz-crushing! Now the valley is given over to the charm of nature in all its original beauty, and the *dilettante* traveller cannot but be grateful to the Chinese for the stern

opposition of the Government to the industrial development of their country; but to the utilitarian half of one's brain it is a sad sight, go where one will throughout the Empire, to see such unique natural advantages as China enjoys absolutely wasted, while her surplus population vainly seeks employment and European capital an outlet for its savings.

*September* 11.—The country north of Wa Sze Kou, on both banks of the Tung river, a mountainous region traversed by no known roads, is still purely Thibetan. As, coming up, we had noticed in the distance a Thibetan village on the opposite left, or China, bank, we determined to make an effort to get across the river to photograph it. To do this we had to cross the rapid Tarchendo by a frail Chinese plank bridge resting on piles, stayed by ropes, and then by a really break-neck path along the face of the cliff, and round the angle by which it divides the two valleys. We then walked 5 *li* up along the right bank of the Tung, over a difficult, little used path, through rocks and luxuriant jungle with no signs of cultivation, to a point opposite the village, where the ferry-boat lay. The ferry is necessarily above Wa Sze Kou, as below this point the afflux of the Tarchendo, coupled with the steep fall in the bed, renders the Tung unferryable in summer; and hence the almost superhuman efforts of the Chinese to erect the Luting bridge. But above Wa Sze Kou the reach of the Tung at this spot is comparatively tranquil. This made it the more annoying that, do what we would, we could not induce the lazy, and probably fearful, Thibetans on the opposite shore to come across to us. Our coolies shouted and waved strings of copper cash, but the few phlegmatic people moving seemed entirely to ignore us. When we arrived the village had apparently not yet woke up, and no one was to be seen. Presently a man appeared driving a flock of sheep before him, and then slowly disappeared up the valley; anon another individual strolled leisurely past, leading a flock of goats up the mountain side. Now a man clad in a loose sheepskin came down to the water side, and we thought

that now at last our time had come; but no! he seemed entirely absorbed in chasing the vermin in his woolly garment, worn wool inside, and disdained to take any notice of us. Then a gentleman emerged on to the flat roof of his three-storied tower-like dwelling and smoked his pipe, his calm content contrasting most aggravatingly with our impatience. A boy came down to the boat and lay on his back in the sun and sang, but other inhabitants, if there were any, did not deign to appear. Meanwhile time was getting on, and we had 75 *li* to go to Luting Chiao before dark. We waited on four solid hours hoping that something would occur to set the ferry boat in motion, but nothing did occur, and so for the second time (the time before at Kin Kou Ho) we had to give up our attempt to cross the Tung river and explore new country on its other bank.

It was past noon when we returned at last to Wa Sze Kou and set out for Luting. Leaving the village, we ascended the cliff to the right, 300 feet above the river by our aneroid, the path generally keeping at about this level above the river, except where it descends to cross one of the deep gullies coming from the wall of granite mountains to the west. Only long familiarity with such paths, and confidence in the sure-footedness of the little pony, with his muscles of iron, made it possible to ride with a yawning precipice falling away at one's feet, especially trying at the many corners to be turned round. We refreshed at Cha Li, in a *tea*-restaurant, picturesquely built upon a rocky projection, overlooking the path and facing the grand amphitheatre of mountains on the opposite shore, but with the whole view purposely shut out by a painted wooden screen, joined to the house by a wooden covering roofing in the roadway. The slopes were almost entirely covered with prickly pear, now in luscious condition, to secure which the passing porters would stop and endanger their lives descending the precipices to gather them. Here paddy-cultivation recommenced, and the Chinaman feels himself once more at home, for land that does not produce rice is looked upon as almost valueless in Central and Southern China, and inquiring into the extent and value of large

estates round Chung King, one is always answered:—"They reap so many piculs of paddy." This is said of estates not one-tenth of whose area can ever be terraced into paddy fields. A bad drought had prevailed here this summer, there having been no rain in the month of June, the season here for planting out the paddy, and the people were dependent on their *p'aoku* ("wrapped grain"), *i.e.*, maize, for their sustenance. But the country has been suffering from drought for some years past; the people told us they had now had five dry summers in succession, and this accounted for the number of vacant villages we passed along the Tung river valley and the number of deserted farmhouses, the woodwork of which had been removed and sold for food. The absolute destruction of the forests and the uprooting of the jungle that prevails wherever the Chinese get a footing would seem to account for this, or the comparatively modern desiccation of Central Asia, which may be due to cosmical causes yet undiscovered. The celebrated naturalist, Père Amand David, who long collected in these regions, and especially in the Moupin district, which lies in the angle formed by the Thibetan ranges running north and south, and the Kiulung range running east and west—the north-west corner of Szechuan proper—cannot believe that the reckless destruction and uprooting of forests that characterises the onward march of Chinese civilisation is due to the need of firewood, as he attributes it rather to the impulse to destroy all cover for wild beasts. In any case it is a much more serious matter than the ignorant rulers of the country can be led to appreciate, and makes one wonder whether the time is coming when China will, like modern Persia and the whilom fertile lands of Central Asia, be some day reduced to their present impoverished condition. We passed many houses with their lower floors entirely blocked and filled up with dried mud and with rock fragments washed down in the August freshets.

# CHAPTER XIII

## BACK IN CHINA AGAIN

THEATRICAL Scene at Yamen—Coolies Malingering—Sleeping in Brick-Tea Porters' Refuge—Phœnix Flat—Fei Yueh Pass—Granite Monolith—Through Fields of Buckwheat—Ching Chi Wind—Pass of West Gap Barrier—Sitting round Red-hot Coal Balls—Zigzaging up Great Elephant Pass—Discarded Sandals—Illicit Stills—Water Parting between Tung and Ya—Where Richthofen was turned back—Tavern of Yellow Earth—Who repairs the Roads?

IT was dark before we reached our destination, and we had to procure lanterns to enable us to proceed, which we did in a most gingerly manner. At length we passed on to the bridge, which was swaying badly—the result, we were told, of the day's breeze and of the day's traffic over it. Hence timid travellers always arrange to cross it in the morning when it has had time to settle itself during the night. Here our coolies had a *fracas* with the likin runners, the rights of which we never clearly understood, but it resulted in two of our men being thrown down on the swaying bridge and some of the furs we had bought in Ta Chien Lu being purloined. When we at last reached the dirty inn at which we had lodged on our way up, our men declared it was a most unprovoked attack, and our boy, or courrier, who was responsible for everything, insisted that I should make a formal complaint to the magistrate of the place, as two of our coolies were too much hurt to be able to proceed, and that unless I got the offenders punished, the people would be too frightened for him to be able to find two substitutes in the morning. Being an old and tried servant, though I was

very, very tired, and particularly loath to make any unnecessary trouble, I consented to let him take my card with my passport to the magistrate, and ask if he would receive me that night. He consented, and, after supper, I walked round, accompanied by two of our Chungking coolies. The old gentleman, who seemed lively and cordial, and hardly troubled by the growth on his neck of an enormous wen, half the size of his head, received me on the daïs in the Audience Hall of his *yamên*, fairly well lit up by numerous red candles. Separating the hall from the court-yard hung a pair of red-cloth curtains, which kept out the chilly night air. After the usual complimentary preliminaries, I described the incident and requested that the offenders should be punished and my stolen furs restored or paid for. He called in my two men, who fell on their knees before the "great man," and told their story with great freedom and clearness, and particularly insisted that the aggressors should be made to give up the furs, which they declared to be still in their possession, and further, that two of their number being disabled from proceeding further, substitutes should be found for them in the morning to carry their loads to Ya Chow. Naturally they were far more voluble than I could be, but when they had done, I represented, in my best Chinese, that I only wanted justice. This was weak on my part, as the result showed, and as all experience of intercourse with Chinese officials teaches, for I neither got back my furs, nor did I get my substitutes for the wounded men. I got dramatic retribution instead, and saw, when it was too late, that I had been foolish in not acting the part of a man determined to have his losses at the hands of servants of the officials (likin runners) made good, and his rights under his passports thoroughly respected. Meanwhile, the kindly old gentleman begged me to drink my tea, and, turning aside to one of the crowd of attendants, spoke a few words to him, which I did not catch, but the man addressed immediately quitted the Hall of Audience. Then, turning to me, the courtly old man began expatiating upon the fact of all "within the four seas" being brothers, and commiserating with me on the loss

of my furs, and wound up by saying, "I have already arranged everything" ("Wo pan liao"), in a loud tone. Instantly the red curtains were drawn aside, disclosing, as in a scene at a play, and lit up by two torch-bearers at the wings, two unfortunate wretches kneeling in cangues, their bodies entirely concealed, their huge wooden collars resting on the floor before us. *C'etait épatant!* Here were the culprits already arrested and punished in an exemplary manner. What greater satisfaction could the most exacting plaintiff demand? and the *mise-en-scène* was perfect, according with the dramatic retribution given. A dead silence filled the hall, the ring of attendants, with their faces lit up by the flaming torches, looking like the chorus in the play on the point of bursting forth in a wail of lament. The two wretched frowsy beggar heads projecting from the wide surface of the cangues, deathly pale and absolutely motionless, looked as though they had long since been severed from their owners' bodies. I was dumbfounded, and not until the torches in the wings had burnt dim and the curtains had been slowly let fall, and a rustle amongst the attendants declared the scene to be at an end, had I the courage to insinuate that these were not the men at all—at all. "The men who made the disturbance with my coolies were decently-attired likin runners," I put in, "and not these two wretched unshorn malefactors." "No doubt your excellency mistook their appearance in the dark," replied the old gentleman in his suavest tones. "The affair had already been brought to my knowledge before your excellency's card was brought to me; I immediately investigated the affair, had the offenders arrested and punished summarily, as you have yourself seen. Our duty and pleasure is to protect and assist guests from afar (yuan ko) and there was no need, as you have seen, even to make a complaint, where an insult to foreign travellers has been given." "But where are the furs?" I asked. "Oh, those fell into the river in the dark. We have a guard on the bridge, and no one would dare have stolen them." "But it is the guard that stole them." "Impossible! The men you saw cangued are the men who tried to attack you, probably

with a view to theft, but they were stopped by my guard." "But how about my two wounded coolies? Those wretches in the cangue could not have struck them and knocked them down; they could not have stolen the furs which were on the top of the peitzes on their backs without attacking them. Besides there were a dozen men at the entrance of the bridge who surrounded them; I thought myself it was to demand likin on the furs, which I was perfectly willing to pay, but I am informed that the only likin payable is on brick tea." It was all no use; the barbarian is ever helpless in an argument with the wily Chinaman; his only chance is to insist on what he wants, and, while so doing, his best plan is to pretend not to understand the arguments against him. Hence, having begun to argue, I was necessarily beaten in advance. I did all I could, being strenuously backed up by my two coolies, who displayed, I thought, astonishing audacity in flatly contradicting the mandarin and declaring over and over again that these were not the men. It was all no use; the mandarin made a good point for his case in insisting that, as the affair took place when it was pitch dark, neither I nor my men could possibly distinguish who the assailants were, and that, but for the promptness of his runners in at once arresting the culprits, it would have been impossible to *pan* the business at all. I might possibly have gained my point—the restoration of the furs or their equivalent —by threatening to stay where I was until my demands were conceded, but unfortunately I had already given way, so there was nothing to be done but to take my leave, which I did, the mandarin politely wishing me a prosperous journey and escorting me to the outer gate with a profusion of bows. When I got back to the inn, our "boy" and our men were furious at the way I had let myself be taken in; our "boy" tried to insist upon my going in the morning to the bridge, when he would point out the real culprits, and that I should then call again upon the official, and not leave the place until justice had been done. I really began to feel ashamed of my diplomatic powers, but I did not think the matter sufficiently serious to make any

more fuss about, although our "boy" represented that if I allowed myself to be thus put upon, he would not be responsible for what might happen in the further course of the journey. I may mention that this invaluable personage, of whom I stand in no little awe when travelling, was formerly the servant of Consul Gardner during his travels, and consequently is fully alive to the rights of British subjects and the wiles of the mandarins, of which, in common with all the lower classes of Chinese, he has a most profound mistrust and dread. It was thus very late before we turned in for the night, after a long and tiring day; but at least I had had an unlooked for dramatic performance thrown in, and a most dramatic scene it was, and one which will always remain pictured on my brain.

*September* 12.—On attempting to start our train this morning, found a general strike amongst our men, who refused to start without substitutes being found for their two wounded companions of the night before. These lay rolled up in their quilts groaning. Our boy could find no unengaged porters in the place, and we were in a quandary which needed a little more than the usually sufficient *suaviter in modo* to get out of. So, suddenly stripping the warm wadded quilt off one of the malingerers, I asked him to show me his wounds. His naked body had not a mark on it; so, telling him I would give him something to recover from if he persisted in remaining, and emphasising my words with a sharp tap from my cane, I forced him up and his fellow likewise. I distributed the loads, and without further demur we got under way.

We set off by the path following the left bank of the Tung, by which we had ascended, and coasted round the "Buddha's Ear" Precipice without further adventure. The fall of stones, which eight days ago was tumbling over with the regularity and persistence of a cascade of water, had now entirely ceased, the weather had cleared up, and the river of ochre mud which accompanied them was quite dried up. But the path round the recess was as narrow, and the friable shale as yielding as ever, and it is a real marvel how the heavy-laden brick-tea

porters succeed in traversing it, or that the Chinese have not attempted to lay out a better road where the traffic is so great.

Our goal for the night was "Phœnix Flat," but our *fracas* with the coolies in the morning had so delayed our start that darkness caught us still stumbling among the boulders and numerous streamlets that form the valley floor through which the uncertain trail winds. Shortly afterwards we reached a small but crowded village built back against the steep hill-side, in which we found a huge brick-tea porters' shelter, with a retired corner in which to spread our beds. The so-called inn was kept by a graduate, an affable old gentleman with white moustache and goatee, who, in his day, had visited the great metropolis of Shanghai, and so held us Western Mantse in comparative respect.

*September* 13.—Setting out in the cool morning air, we left the level of the stream where we had slept, and climbed up the extraordinarily steep, rocky path, to the picturesque, flat-topped rock, 500 feet above, upon which stands the well-built town of Hua Ling Ping ("Phœnix Flat"). Ascending to it, the situation is far more striking than in coming down upon it from above, as one faces the splendid amphitheatre of wooded peaks, dotted with temples and waterfalls, which form the background; the heights culminating in the twin mountains between which goes the pass of Fei Yueh, or "Fly beyond," as the name correctly written indicates, and which leads to the valley of Itu. We mounted the interminable zigzag in a Scotch mist which soaked us to the skin, found the same old man crouching over a wood fire in the ruinous guard-house, accepted a cup of hot water, our eyes nearly blinded by the smoke as we sat on a bench by the fire smouldering on the earth floor, and then descended on the other side by a path so bad that even the led pony came near breaking his neck; but we were in some way compensated by the magnificent display of wild flowers and evergreen shrubs. We followed down the Itu river, which has its source in this wild glen, until the path led us again through the cultivated country and past the small hamlets along the top

and on the left bank of the limestone gorge through which the stream has cut its way before the valley widens out and gives room for the rich basin in which stands Itu. The walls of the gorge, red in places and overhung with dark-green shrubs, were very beautiful, but were entirely dwarfed by the panorama of cloud-capped mountains on either side. West of the town we noticed a granite monolith, about 20 feet high, in shape a pillar surmounted, or rather surrounded, by a rectangular cradle, like the flag-staffs in front of Chinese *yamêns*, which Baber believed to be survivals of Phallic worship. Most monuments of this description are ancient, but here was one brand new; on its face were four deeply-cut large characters, thickly inlaid with gold, *Wen*, *Wu*, *Sze*, *Shu*—literally translated, "Civil, Military, Four, Erect." A more lengthy inscription on the pedestal showed it to have been set up only eight years since—a votive offering for Itu's success at the triennial examinations. The completion of 80 *li* brought us at dark to the gorgeous inn where we had slept on our way up.

*September* 14.—We were now to diverge from the devious and romantic by-way by which we had come from Mount Omi, coasting the southern face of its mass, along the valley of the Tung—and to turn aside to the north, to cross the Elephant Pass to Yachow, thence to descend the Ya river, which skirts the *massif* of Omi on its north side,—and so complete the circuit at Kiating. We were to make a short cut across country, and join the great high road at Yang Chuan Mên, 90 *li* distant, with two passes intervening, so a very early start was necessary. Upon leaving Itu we continued down the valley a distance of 15 *li* through fields of buckwheat, now in flower, to the hamlet of Shan Chi Kou, where we breakfasted at 7.30, having come down to 4700 feet. Here we turned off to the north, up a steep path, crossing red hills in which the water-courses had scored green gashes, exposing the subsoil, and having curiously brought to light a brilliant complementary colour. At 10.30 we had ascended 1700 feet to Liang Fung Kang—Gold Wind Ridge—the pass leading to the wide and wild valley in the

centre of which stands the walled district city of Ching Chi (Ch'ing Ch'i Hsien: "City of Limpid Streams"). We went down by a side valley, with on our right purple slopes broken up by red and white precipices with more gently sloping ledges on our left, until at 2.30 we reached Shih Men Kang—Rock Gate Ridge, 4900 feet. We now left the city on our right, 4 miles distant, and a long way below. We could just make out its outline with the glass, its crenelated walls bounded on the south by a deep ravine in the barren clayey soil, through which flowed a small clear stream. The city is a poor, thinly inhabited place, in keeping with the barren country surrounding it. The interior, viewed from a distance, seemed embowered in trees, and, as is the case with so many Chinese towns, made a delightful impression, which a nearer acquaintance would probably have dispelled. Although I speak of valley, yet the mountainous country in which it lies is only such in comparison with the high ranges which form the boundary of the "district," the main ranges, as everywhere hereabouts, running north and south. The native proverb says: "Ching Chi wind, Yachow rain," and so we found it; a gale of wind blew from the north, and we found it almost impossible to set up the camera. This was an almost unprecedented experience ever since the day of our departure from Chungking. Continuing our way by many ups and downs, through hillocks of clay covered with coarse grass and bushes, we ascended to the pass of Hsi Ya Kou ("West Gap Barrier"), which traverses a range of five wooded pyramidal precipitous peaks, and found ourselves once more at 6600 feet above the sea, whence, looking back, we enjoyed one of the wildest, and at the same time most extended, views we had encountered since leaving Omi. The higher summits were enveloped in cloud, as usual, but all below the wide valley lay clear and distant as in a map. It was a wild gloomy prospect, with not a living creature in view to disturb the solitude. We now descended 1300 feet to Ya She Po, which we reached at dusk, and were still 15 *li* distant from our destination for the night, where we had given our men *rendesvous*, as these had

gone on ahead while we were photographing and loitering. "Gap Market Slope" was a small crowded village whose inhabitants appeared to be all occupied in threshing barley and making up coal bricks, or rather dumplings, from anthracite dust extracted from the neighbouring range. Another climb of 1500 feet up a rocky path, most difficult to mount in the dark, brought us at length to the main road which runs through Yung Chuan Mên, ascending which we arrived at the farther (western) extremity of the long straggling village, which is a sort of extension of the western suburb of Ching Chi Hsien. Here we found a spacious barn-like inn, in which we gladly took up our quarters for the night. Big fires of red-hot coal balls, burning in scientifically constructed furnaces, made of fire-bricks bound round with iron bands, were placed about the wide earth floor: round these, seated on low wooden benches, were grouped crowds of coolies, the *coup d'œil*, with no other light in the vast enclosure, producing a most picturesque effect; nor were we sorry to crowd in amongst them and warm ourselves at the grateful glow. Meanwhile our hard-worked attendants, who had walked every step of the way, were spreading our beds in a quiet corner, where, after a hasty supper, cooked at the fire at which we were warming ourselves, we were not slow in betaking ourselves to rest; and well we did rest in the sweet mountain air, delightful indeed when compared with the gilded palace of Itu the night before, with its indescribable odours and other amenities.

*September* 15.—Set off in mist and rain to cross the Ta Hsian Ling, or "Great Elephant Pass," 9366 feet above the sea (Gill).

We are now on the main road to the capital, the details of which have been fully described by Gill and other travellers. Captain Gill translates the name of this pass or range (for the Chinese are not exact in their definitions, and "ling" may mean a range in which there is a pass, or the pass proper) as "Great Minister's" pass, but he must have been given the character wrongly, for not only is it unmistakably "Elephant" in all the

Chinese maps (such as they are), but is it not an undoubted fact that Pusien could have ridden his elephant by no other pass into China, and did ride him over this pass and so name it? Captain Gill speaks of it as "One of the worst roads I ever travelled on. Now zigzaging up the side of a mountain, the path was cut in steep steps over sharp-pointed rocks." We expected, therefore, not to be able to ride the pony, but the little animal behaved splendidly as usual, never refusing anything he could get his little legs to stretch to; never halting at the steepest and highest rock-step, except occasionally to take breath; a few moments sufficed, and he was off again at a scrambling canter. But in truth, compared with many others we had gone over, we found this a particularly easy pass, and have no doubt about the elephant, whereas many of the other passes, the "Rain-clothes," for instance, by which we passed down from the Washan into the valley of the Tung, would prove a poser to the best-trained animal Pusien could have selected for his journey. We were less agreeably disappointed in the weather, the rain and mist entirely destroying all chance of the view from the summit, which on a fine day must be extremely grand. We reached the summit of the pass at nine o'clock, and at a restaurant called Tsao Hai Ping ("Sandal Flat"), from the number of sandals worn out in the ascent and here discarded, we breakfasted. The restaurant, like many in these high places, did not provide tea, but only wine, and, as an exception, the climate being analogous to that of the Scotch highlands, I ordered four ounces of *kaoliang*, a spirit distilled from millet. The spirit is served hot in a pewter pot with cups holding about a thimbleful. The cost was fifteen cash, or one halfpenny. Our coolies mostly did the same, and all about this country spirits are the common drink, and yet, notwithstanding their ridiculous cheapness, one sees no drunkenness, and rarely any jollity. There is no tax on distilleries; indeed, theoretically they are all illegal; in the centre of the town of Fulin we noticed a grand proclamation carved in huge characters on a lofty stone tablet prohibiting the cultivation of millet. Why

these continue to be issued when no dinner party in China, whether amongst the rich or the poor, is complete without liquor, is one of those things no one, not even a Chinaman, can explain.

This range forms the water-parting between the basins of the Tung and the Ya, and one of the feeders of the latter river has here its rise, and we followed it down, rapidly increasing in size, all the way until we reached Yachow, where it unites with the main branch coming from the north-west. The change in the aspect of the country was very marked. On the further side the land was a barren clay, badly watered and producing mostly long grass and weeds, much like many of the mountains in Japan, but rare in China. On the hither side we found the most magnificent subtropical vegetation, many varieties of ferns, very fine-grown tall grass-like canes with red-tasselled flower, prettier than Pampas grass while rather like it—the whole valley a wealth of greenery, lit up here and there by deep blue hydrangeas. Not only is this region better watered than the country to the west of it, but the soil of these eastern slopes is the true Szechuan red sandstone which from this point extends eastwards almost uninterruptedly across to the Hupeh frontier, while behind the Siangling it only occurs in patches. It was on this spot that the geologist Richthofen was turned back, owing to a *fracas* with Chinese soldiers, the details of which he has not thought fit to publish. It is unfortunate for his readers and the scientific world generally that his travels were thus arrested just at the extreme limit of the red sandstone basin he has so well described, for it would have been of the greatest interest to have had his views of the more diversified granite country beyond, a region that no competent geologist has yet visited. We descended by a well-paved, rather steep incline, with the clear stream flowing on our right-hand, down 3000 feet to the village of Ta Kuan ("Great Barrier"), where we dined soon after noon; and then down another 2000 feet to Huang Ni Pu, which we reached at four o'clock, and where we decided to spend the night, notwithstanding that the inn was as dirty

and unattractive as the name of the village would lead one to expect; for Huang Ni means "Yellow Mud," Huang Ni Pu "The Tavern of Yellow Earth." The floor of the guest-room, where we supped, was strewn with horse-dung, and our sleeping chamber was far more repulsive; but it poured with rain, and whatever we might have done ourselves, we could not make our laden coolies proceed further in the sticky loam, with here and there an island of rock sticking out of it, which the path had now become. We were down to 3900 feet above sea level, and the air felt close and muggy. We had passed two suspension bridges on our way down, about three feet wide, the chains carried out level with the bank and some distance inland, one on each side of the path, back to a spot where a secure anchorage could be found. We also had to cross several bad washouts of the usual character, one particularly bad and difficult—a hundred yards of angular rock fragments lying about loosely in a sea of red mud. On such occasions the brick-tea porters have to wait until the road is made passable, which is done by the neighbouring inhabitants, chiefly tavern-keepers, who depend for their livelihood upon the passing traffic. More expensive and permanent repairs are effected by the guilds of merchants, who make use of the roads for their special business. Here it is the Yachow tea guild; there—on the way to Fulin, for instance—it is the salt guild. We often met individual men performing trifling repairs, who beg a few cash from the passers-by, but we never found out that the Government or the officials had anything to do with the business. Other curiosities noticed on the road to-day were an old woman being carried in a *peitze* (creel) on a man's back to Ta Chien Lu; and deep holes worn in the rocks by the feet of the crutches upon which the brick-tea porters rest their loads when stopping along the road. Many convenient ledges were so pitted with these holes, the work of untold generations of porters, that they were bad footing to walk over. Did the whole 60 *li* on foot to-day, but the fresh cool mountain air and home-like drizzle banished all fatigue.

# CHAPTER XIV

## YACHOW AND THE BRICK-TEA DISTRICT

THE Splendid and Classical District — Large Farmsteads—Noble Groves—Careful Cultivation—Exuberance of Triumphal Arches—Carrying Coal—Coffinwood—Rich Red Mud—Tea for Savages—Yachow—Larky Young Men—Practising with Bows and Arrows—Purchasing Pony — Tea Bushes — Tea made into Cakes — How Carried—Cost of a Tea Brick—Thibetan Wax.

*September* 16.—Off early, glad to get quit of our foul quarters, though it still poured, and the little pony having lost a shoe the day before, and being now dead lame, we had to go on foot. The valley widened out as we went on, and the descent became barely perceptible; in our day's journey of 90 *li* we only descended 1500 feet. In this valley is comprised the district of Yung Ching ("Splendid and Classical"), and a splendid region it truly is; and as rich economically as it is delightful to behold. High mountains surround it, but at a distance, being shut off by intervening comically-shaped hills, ranging from 1000 to 15,000 feet in height, richly cultivated and bedecked with groves of fine trees. The soil is a rich purple formed of decaying sandstone, interspersed with patches of limestone, beloved of palms, and in places the path was a tesselated floor of beautifully marked brecciated conglomerate, in which steps had been toilsomely excavated. Large walled-in farmsteads abounded, covering two or three acres of ground, the buildings plastered white, the black wooden framework showing through. These buildings, which often house a family of one or two hundred members, were half con-

On the Great Brick Tea Road. Ears of Indian Corn Drying under the Eaves of the Houses.

cealed in groves of noble trees. Profound peace and prosperity seems characteristic of the region as of Szechuan generally, but the people and the villages we passed through were repulsively dirty, the women all small-footed, whereas in the mountains natural feet were the rule, and the people there, though poor, were clean by comparison. All efforts at cleanliness and order seem exhausted on the agriculture; not a weed is visible in the fields, the embankments are beautifully finished, the irrigation perfectly arranged, and every inch of ground occupied by an incessant rotation of crops. Although we saw no regular tea plantations, but only scattered shrubs surrounding the houses, and growing to a height of 8 to 10 feet, we bought here the finest green tea (*experto crede*) we had ever tasted. The eaves of the cottages sheltered festoons of bright orange-coloured maize, stored in the cob, gathered in August; and the rice harvest was in progress. The paddy was being threshed out in the fields, men and women holding bundles of the straw in their hands and knocking out the ear by banging it against the sides of a box in which the grain was collected. Close alongside, the paddy, after being dried in the sun, was being husked in mills driven by the stream, upon the banks of which the simple machinery was temporarily placed for the occasion. Each farmer thus completes the work under his own eye and is independent of millers and factors. Cotton is the only crop wanting, the lack of continuous dry autumn sunshine making this second necessity of the Chinese a precarious crop in Szechuan generally; but its place is taken by imported Indian yarn, which the country people weave themselves into a far more useful fabric than our mills turn out. Being more loosely woven it is softer and warmer, and the fabric is not injured by pressing and sizing as in the steam-manufactured article. We were much struck by the number and exuberance of triumphal (or rather memorial) arches which we passed under, an unmistakable indication of the wealth of the district.

At Yung Ching Hsien, the capital city of the district, where we dined, the river is about fifty yards wide and flows over a shingle bed in eddies of beautifully transparent water, with a current of about four knots. It was crossed frequently by the housed-in bridges common to Szechuan, and its banks were lined in places by groves of fine bamboos which afforded a delightful shade. After leaving Yung Ching, we met many porters carrying coal to the city from mines 30 *li* distant. They told us that they purchased the coal at the pit's mouth for 30 cash a picul and sold it in the city for 60, thus receiving a halfpenny a load, or two shillings and eightpence a ton for the ten miles' portage, which thus exactly doubles the cost. But coal is so universally distributed throughout Szechuan, and so easily accessible, that the lack of proper communication is not severely felt, and people and officials are perfectly contented with things as they are. We also passed many wretched coolies laden with coffin wood from the famous Chien Chang Valley, of which Fulin is the northern outlet; for transporting a load of wood across the mountains from this latter town, Yachow, a distance of under one hundred miles, but which occupies them twelve days, they receive 1600 cash (four shillings), the load weighing 240 pounds. Owing to the ravages of cholera this autumn the demand for coffins is exceptional. Towards evening we were ferried across a beautiful reach of the river on a raft of bamboo, the steep wooded bank on the further side reflected in the clear green water, with a pagoda crowning a distant height, in the direction of which our path lay. Below the wide still pool the river ran in a succession of pellucid rapids, amidst stretches of big red, white and green boulders. The raft was hauled across by a fixed bamboo hawser. Then by a charming path up and down through dark woods to the dirty village of Shih Chia Chiao, where, however, we were fortunate in finding a new clean inn into which we entered just as it was getting dark.

*September* 17.—A picturesque but difficult path took us

over the pass that separates the Yung Ching district from that of Ya Ngan, "Refined Repose," as the central district of the Yachow Prefecture is denominated. Shih Chia Chiao we made 2300 feet above the sea, and we had to ascend 1400 feet higher to the Fei Lung Kuan, the "Flying Dragon Barrier," the Western gateway of the Ya Ngan district. The rain came down in torrents, and the wet, muddy, clayey, red *humus* rendered the climb a trial of patience, as we slipped back at every step. But what is our patience to that of the poor laden coolies who are paid, and miserably paid, by the job! We had too to scramble over several washouts such as I have before described; and it was with no small feeling of relief that, after 15 *li* of crab-like progress, we stopped, at half-past seven, at a crowded wayside *Putse* (shop) for breakfast, the name of the hamlet being Ma Liu, "The Poplars." The path led on up the hill through luxuriant vegetation, past plantations of firs, poplar, maize and bamboo, clusters of rose-bushes in flower intermingled with waxy pink begonias and lovely banks of ferns, a hot-house vegetation and a hot-house air. At 9.30 we gained the summit, 3700 feet above the sea, and reached the basin proper of Ya Cheo Fu. Descending by the slippery path on the other side, we wound round amongst hills adorned with groves of fine trees, their rich dark-green foliage contrasting well with the crimson earth. In one place A. slipped off the narrow kang (embanked path) into a paddy field, the soft bottom of which broke the fall, but left her plastered over with rich red mud for the rest of the day. At times we followed along by the banks of the brawling stream, crossed in one place by a marvellous wooden bridge with a three-storied pagoda-like erection crowning its centre arch. The road was thronged with laden porters and animals; hundreds of mules and ponies, carrying bales of native calico, all muzzled, lest they should nibble the corn by the wayside; men, and a few women, carrying salt and also cotton cloth; all these we met going west. In company with us were strings of coolies carrying coal to Yachow, and others laden with what we

took to be bundles of brushwood for fuel, strapped to their backs, but which on inquiry we found to be tea: they were literally branches of bushes to which a scant number of red-brown autumn leaves were still attached, good enough for Thibetan savages! We passed several busy towns, gay with painted and richly gilt *paifang*, and, at length, turning off and up through a side gap, a ruined fort and stone archway defending the pass, the city of Ya Chow was visible in the distance. The site of Yachow, as is that of most Chinese cities, is admirably chosen; it stands on a rocky elevation at the fork of the Ya and Yung Ching rivers, which almost encircle its hoary battlements, and from which, on the northern or land-side, the ground falls away in rocky precipices. Descending farther six hundred feet by a well-paved but narrow path, and having often to step aside for the many Sedan chairs and cavaliers that filed along the road, we passed at length under a beautifully carved *paifang*, with open fretwork in its stone panels, and entered at the south gate of the city at five o'clock.

Yachow is one of the most pleasing cities I have seen in China; the streets are exceptionally wide and clean, the temples numerous, highly decorated and well kept; there are many fine trees scattered about, and the well-furnished shops are such as betoken the centre of a rich and populous district. But the people! faugh! There was, however, some excuse for the rabble which followed us as we ran the gauntlet of what always seem endless streets until an inn is found, for we were sadly travel-stained, and the fine sunshine, while adding to the friendly appearance of the town, had dried the red mud with which our clothes were covered into a hard cake. The town, too, was filled with military students, whose competitive examination was in progress, and we were thankful at last to find an innkeeper who was willing to take us in, though his inn was full of students. He could, however, only give up a small side room, just large enough to spread our two travelling beds in. We vanished quickly from the crowd and fastened the

"Paifang," or Memorial Arch, outside the South Gate of Yachow.

door; but the window was soon torn to pieces, and our servants were nowhere in their efforts to keep away the mob of students. A. was anxious to wash and change her things, but all she could do was to sit down on her bed and wait. I went out, A. bolting the door behind me, and after many attempts to gain the attention of the crowd, at last got a hearing. They were a lot of well-dressed, larky young men and meant no harm, though they did regard us as *Mantse* (savages), as I heard some of the crowd, who had followed us in from the street, informing the students we were. I appealed to them as to whether it was *Li* (manners) to intrude upon a woman's apartment, and what they would say if I were to do the same by them. I said: "I have come out so that you may examine me, but please leave the woman in peace." I succeeded at last in drawing them off and getting way made for two of our best coolies to stand guard at the door and window, so that A. was enabled to change and so sit down to supper in comparative comfort. Nothing is done in China without noise; every one shouts at the top of his voice, and a European, to carry any weight, must do the same; hence, to any one unaccustomed to China the proceedings might have seemed those of a murderous riot. A. was however accustomed, and so was not needlessly alarmed. After we had supped I went out into the spacious guest-hall of the inn, in which some fifty young men were assembled, mostly occupied in trying each other's bows and arrows, a target hung to a curtain at the upper end of the hall being lit up with torches. We soon made friends, and I only then showed them my revolver, having, of course, first carefully extracted the cartridges. They pleaded earnestly that I should fire it at the target, and I had difficulty in explaining to them that the *vis inertiæ* of the hanging curtain would not stop the momentum of a bullet, as it did most effectively that of the arrows. I also negotiated the purchase of the pony, who was still lame, and whom we had latterly been unable to ride, and, with the assistance of my new-found friends, who took an intense interest in the bargain, eventually purchased him for fifteen taels cash

down. We were to go on from here by rafts, and our land journey was now at an end, but we were so pleased with the little animal's temper, pluck and endurance, that we determined to secure him for future journeys. Although a pony is almost as expensive a luxury as a Sedan chair in this land, where it costs less to keep two men than a horse, yet the advantage of the latter, as far as seeing the country is concerned, is incomparable; so we detached one of our men to lead him overland, hence to Chungking, and then proceeded to pack up for an early departure on the raft in the morning.

*September* 18.—Yachow is the centre of the brick-tea trade, and we cannot quit the city without saying a few words about it, although, as far as we were concerned, we contented ourselves with what we saw of its mode of transit, and did not care to delay a day in order to visit the factories, whose proprietors, too, would not have been by any means pleased to see us, with a train of unruly students at our heels. But those readers who have followed us so far, if they have not read Baber's exhaustive paper on the subject, published by the Royal Geographical Society in 1882, may perhaps be glad if I venture to inflict upon them a recapitulation of the most interesting facts regarding this important business—a business over which Chinese diplomats have been engaged in a prolonged dispute with our Indian Government.

The area of country engaged in producing tea for the Thibetan market, of which Yachow is the centre, embraces about 3500 square miles. The trees are grown on the hillsides or in the hedge-rows of the fields, and, though abundant, are not conspicuous. They are scrubby and straggling plants, very different in appearance from the carefully tended bushes of Eastern China, and are allowed to attain to much greater height, reaching to 9 or 10 feet on the average. The coarser leaves are about 2½ inches long. The trees yield tea available for market in the fourth year of growth and for many subsequent years. The harvest is ready in the end of June, and there are three subsequent pickings; the best is of the young

upper leaves from trees of all ages; the second consists of the leaves of young plants, and the third includes everything else that can be spared, being mostly leaves and sticks with a scant proportion of coarse foliage. The Chinese are epicures enough to retain all the first quality for themselves, and most of the second, asserting that the Thibetans, whom, by the way, they regard as savages, would not appreciate them. The tea for Thibetan consumption consists, therefore, entirely of the merest refuse. This sells in Yungching for 2000 cash a picul, the common tea drunk by the poorer classes in the neighbourhood costing nearer 20,000 cash a picul.

Having purchased this tea-brushwood, the manufacturers proceed to make it up for the ignorant Thibetan. The leaves and twigs, already sun-dried, are steamed in a cloth suspended over a boiler. The mould stands close by, four stout boards set on end and secured with bitts, the interior having a section of 9 inches by 3½. Inside it is placed a neatly woven mat-basket, somewhat smaller in section than the mould; the steamed and softened twigs and leaves are dropped into the cavity by small quantities at a time, and, a little rice-water being added to agglutinate the mass, it is consolidated, layer after layer, by forcible blows from the wooden rammer, shod with a heavy iron shoe. The coarser sticks are dried and ground to powder, and interspersed *ad libitum* among the conglomerate of leaves and twigs. The cake, with its envelope of bamboo matting, is then thoroughly dried over a fire, the ends are closed up, and it is made into a *pao*, which at Yachow measures about 3 feet in length, and weighs 15 catties. On arrival at Ta Chien Lu these cakes are cut into portions termed *chuan* or bricks.

The packages are conveyed to Ta Chien Lu by tea-porters or on mule back. A porter carries twice as much as a mule, but a mule travels more than twice as fast as a porter. The man's burden is arranged on a light wooden frame disposed along the whole of his back, and rising in a curve over his shoulders and high above his head, being supported by a

couple of slings, generally made of coir, through which his arms are passed. The great weights that can be carried in this manner are certainly astonishing. As Richthofen writes: "There is probably no road in the world where such heavy loads are carried by men across high mountains. I was assured that some men carry 18 *pao*—324 catties." (We ourselves counted several loads of this number, but the usual quantity was twelve to fourteen: and Baber mentions one freighted with twenty-two of the large Yachow packages, and adds that, although a dried *pao* weighs considerably less than eighteen catties, yet this man could not have had on his back less than four hundred English pounds.) They make a journey from Yachow to Ta Chien Lu in about three weeks, and earn from 200 to 300 cash a day, according to their loads, returning usually empty-handed, and, of course, at their own expense. The statistics so conscientiously collected by Baber, which he carefully details, lead him to the conclusion that the annual quantity imported into Ta Chien Lu was about ten million pounds English, of a value there of Rs. 1,800,000, or £160,000 sterling. In addition to this, considerable quantities, as well as silks and other goods, are smuggled across the frontier in the train of the Chinese officials accredited to Thibet, of whom the Thibetans say: "They come to our country without trousers, and go away with a thousand baggage-yaks."

The cost of a small *pao* of four bricks Baber gives as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Eleven catties of leaves, &c. . . . . | 200 cash |
| Dues on permit (at Yachow) . . . . . | 50 ,, |
| Dues at Luting bridge and Ta Chien Lu . . | 36 ,, |
| Freight from Yungching to Ta Chien Lu . . | 320 ,, |
| Preparation and packing (say) . . . . | 100 ,, |
| | 706 cash |

A brick of common tea, weighing about four pounds, sells in Ta Chien Lu for 2 mace, and in Batang, eighteen days further, for 1 rupee—nearly double; and, by the time it reaches Lhassa the price is said to be nearly doubled again.

With this ratio of geometrical progression, if tea was ever carried overland to Europe, it must have been literally invaluable by the time it reached there. But the above figures show that the taxation derived from the trade by the Chinese Government is a most moderate one. In fact, compared with the exactions of European or American customs and excise, all likin and customs duties throughout the Chinese Empire are imposed on a most modest scale.

There is one most useful product of Thibet we have omitted to mention, and that is sealing-wax, of which we laid in a stock at Ta Chien Lu; this wax softens at a very much higher temperature than European sealing-wax, and so can be used freely in tropical countries. The Thibetans apply seals to all their boxes and packets, and seem all supplied with this wax. In this connection it may be mentioned that their method of writing is much the same as ours, and travellers can hardly make them more valued small presents than steel pens, penholders, and English paper.

# CHAPTER XV

## RAFTING ON THE RIVER YA

**Fall in Tu—Raft—Red Walls, Green Fenns—Yellow Lilies—Tortoise Gorge—Waves wetting us up to our Knees—City of Coffins—Parting from our Coolies—Thousand Buddhas Precipice—Figures half Life Size—Indian Type—Bamboos acting as Sounding-boards—Thirteen-storied Pagoda—Junction with the Tung—China Inland Mission—Wine Export—Boat Bargaining.**

*September* 18.—Yachow we made to be 1700 feet above the sea, and Kiating 1050. Thus the fall in the Ya between these two points is about 650 feet in a distance of some 80 or 90 miles, or, roughly, 7 feet per mile. Compare this with the fall from Chungking to the sea—630 feet for a distance of 1500 miles—and it will be seen that we must have had a fine current to carry us on our homeward journey. And, indeed, we found the river a succession of turbulent rapids, with huge breaking waves, far fiercer than any of the famous rapids of the navigable portion of the Yangtze. There were, however, numerous reaches where the river widened out into comparatively calm stretches of deep transparent water, flowing between tree-clad banks, most delightful to float down in the balmy summer air. The Grand Highway, uniting Thibet with the capital, here crosses the river by a raft ferry, and continues overland in a north-easterly direction; whereas our course was now south-east, at right angles to the road we had been traversing since quitting the banks of the Tung. The body of water was about half, or perhaps two-thirds, that of the Tung, and drained a more open and friendly country by contrast. The gorges cut in the yield-

ing red sandstone were very picturesque and pretty, but lacked the forbidding sublimity of the stupendous limestone ravines through which its twin sister forces her way, before they unite to form the main constituent of the Min a few miles above the walls of Kiating.

We engaged a big raft to convey ourselves and all our belongings to Kiating, a two days journey, for 4 taels (16*s*.). It took some time to get our baggage safely stowed and lashed on a narrow central platform, raised some 18 inches above the floor of the raft, and to get the crew together; and it was ten o'clock before we actually got under way. The raft itself was composed of a series, each of twenty-five bamboo canes laid together horizontally, their bases, about eight inches in diameter, forming the stern and their points the bow; these were curled upwards and formed a neat and effective prow in breaking the big rollers we passed through. Although we had chartered the vessel for our own party exclusively—twelve in all—yet, *more Sinensi*, the captain could not resist taking some additional passengers with their luggage, and some merchandise. These, with the crew of four men, brought the number up to about twenty; and the raft, when we started, was literally under water. We had to go on board with bare feet and turn up our clothes to avoid the wash of the waves; but the feeling of delicious repose after our long toilsome land travel would have reconciled us to much more than this slight discomfort. And there was no danger, for we were on literally a tubular lifeboat, 66 feet long by 11 feet beam, and 8 inches draught. As we glided away down the tranquil reach, the hoary city walls fading from view until nothing but its surrounding amphitheatre of distant blue mountains was visible, we found ourselves making straight for a steep wooded range, about 1000 feet high, at the foot of which we entered a beautiful lake-like expanse, with no visible outlet before us. We now left the smiling open country, with its green lawns and prosperous villages of white houses, relieved by the red walls and curling roofs of many a picturesque temple and pavilion-crowned

bridge, and suddenly dashed into a cleft in the hills and found ourselves unexpectedly between the overhanging walls of a most lovely gorge. The rich red sandstone formation, with its horizontal stratification and vertical cleavage, has lent itself to the formation of a zigzag cutting through the range which the river traverses in a series of six striking, regular, rectangular reaches, with a slight rapid at each of the sharp angles. The red walls were beautifully hung with dark-green ferns and creepers, among them many bunches of yellow lilies. Unlike the muddy Yangtze, the water was a clear green, and, as each successive turn opened out a fresh view, we voted the Ya the prettiest of the many beautiful rivers which are the crowning adornment of this unique region. The name of the gorge is the Wu Kuei, or "Tortoise Gorge," so called from the unmistakable resemblance to that, to the Chinese, mysterious animal of a huge stalactite on its right wall. Numerous waterfalls from the cliffs above completed the picture. Below this gorge we descended some tremendous rapids, with huge breaking waves which wetted us up to the knees, and it was a pleasure to see how our raft tore through them, with a snake-like motion, as it ascended and descended the rollers, smoothing them for the moment like oil as it passed over them. Our captain had taken the precaution of landing all the passengers, except our two selves, so as to lighten the vessel and render her more buoyant. We had to wait a long time below each rapid for these men to catch us up, fast as they tried to run.

We did the forty miles to Hung Ya in about five hours and tied up here for the night, under a boulder bank cemented together by the roots of fine banyan trees, as also loquats, growing out of its top. The city of Hung Ya was familiar to us by report from the carpenters from this district, whom we had met so busily at work on Mount Omi, but any number had been left behind, and these were all hard at work making coffins, which seemed the sole occupation of the inhabitants of the suburb in which we took up our quarters for the night. We found an inn here; a spacious range of buildings with

many courtyards, but it was so crowded with prepared coffins, and others in process of manufacture, that we had to climb over them to get to the room allotted to us at the back, and when there, we had to use coffins to lay our beds on and had a coffin to sup off. They were all made of *shamoo* (*Cunninghamia*), the planking about eight inches thick, and cost 7 taels (say 30*s*.) a piece unvarnished. The walled city itself stood about a mile inland, separated from this suburb by a grassy flat, evidently subject to overflow by the river; the ground on which the city is built being about 30 feet higher, a steep flight of steps leading up to the south gate, through which we entered. We found it a nice clean well-to-do city, with wide streets. The principal thoroughfares were festooned with cypress boughs, and tables, with candles and incense burning on them, were set out in the streets at intervals. The poor people were making New Year, they said, to drive away the pestilence which was decimating Hung Ya as it had decimated Chungking, Kiating, Chêng Tu and the other principal cities of the province, and the idea of celebrating an imitation of the New Year festivities seems to be to turn over a new leaf and purify the country from evil spirits as at New Year time. The gods are propitiated with fasting and prayer, and the sale of all flesh food and the slaughtering of animals is strictly forbidden.

*September* 19.—Set off soon after dawn on our life-boat, which was lightened by the setting ashore of our passengers as also the four carrying coolies whom we had engaged on Mount Omi for the round trip, and for whom this was the nearest point for them to reach their home from. They went off on the opposite right shore, pleased with their earnings and dressed in the sheepskins they had bought so cheap at Ta Chien Lu. The valley now opened out still more, the river flowing between undulating hills, highly cultivated and well wooded, the right bank being formed of the outermost northern foot-hills of Mount Omi, whose distant mass, as seen from this point, and when occasionally visible through the haze which seems always to prevail in Szechuan, reminded us by its appearance of the

Lushan mountains behind Kiukiang. About noon we entered another gorge, or rather gate, of red sandstone cliffs, known as Chienfo Ngai, or "Thousand Buddhas Precipice," the whole surface of which had been panelled out into niches containing images of innumerable Buddhas. A fine road, 6 feet wide, had been cut out along the cliff side, executed, according to an inscription in the rock, from the fifteenth to the twenty-fifth years of the reign of Kien Lung, and again restored in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tao Kuang. The cost had been defrayed by the citizens of Hia-kiang Hsien, in which district this celebrated cliff, together with the neighbouring town of Fo Ngai Kai, are situated. We noticed six donors of 50 taels each amongst the list of subscribers—large sums for these parts. The figures were exceedingly well cut, about half life-size, some smaller, and were remarkable for the distinct Indian type prevailing; narrow waists, limbs showing their outline through gauzy habiliments, and tall Hindoo headgear; many necklaces on the bare bosoms of the female figures, which are quite opposed to Chinese ideas of propriety. Others were seated with a leg across the knee, and in other informal and improper attitudes, according to Chinese ideas. Many of the panels are very ancient, and their carvings undecipherable; others appear to have been touched up recently. It was a very striking sight, and we were glad to embrace the opportunity of our captain stopping at the village to land cargo and make purchases, to go ashore and secure some photographs. The crowd was not aggressive, our only danger being that in their anxiety to see what we were doing, they might push each other off the narrow ledge into the river, in which case we might have suffered as the indirect cause of the trouble. Hence we dared not stay long, nor do all we wanted. From here on, the stream was quieter, and the rapids insignificant when compared with the grand cataracts of the day before, but we made good progress notwithstanding. We had to content ourselves with cold rice on board the raft, but to-day, about dinner-time, we noticed a noise as of frying in fat, and thought our ingenious cook must

Sculptured Headland on the Banks of the River Ya.

have rigged up a furnace in the stern behind the luggage. We discovered, however, to our surprise, that the crackling noise came from the rolling of the boulders over the river bottom, the sound being transmitted through the water, the contact of which with the hollow bamboos, acting like sounding-boards, produced this marvellous noise. Yesterday the bamboos were mostly submerged, but to-day, being well out of water, they resounded like organ-pipes. The noise was constant, showing the shingly bed to be constantly in motion. We passed a thirteen-storied square pagoda, such as are only seen in Western Szechuan, and were struck with the wealth of magnificent *Hoangko* trees (Banians: *Ficus infectoria*) along the banks. At length we traversed the whirlpool formed by the junction of the Tung and the Ya, and so completed our circuit of the valleys of these two fascinating rivers in just sixty days. The hitherto pellucid waters of the Ya now became turbid through admixture of the milky water of the Tung, which again two miles lower down are all merged in the thick red mud of the Min at Kiating. This latter city we reached in safety at four o'clock, having taken ten hours to traverse the forty miles from Hung Ya—just double the time which the same distance occupied yesterday. We were most hospitably received here by the members of the China Inland Mission, who have now obtained a roomy, pleasantly situated establishment in this, one of the most pleasing of China's cities, and right glad we were, while delayed here transhipping to a junk bound down the Yangtze to Chungking, to escape the amenities of a Chinese inn.

These rivers are navigated by bamboo rafts exclusively, and these have arrived by evolution at the perfection of strength and lightness, while possessing the valuable quality for rough navigation, that of being limber at the same time. Our captain informed us that his raft was calculated to carry 30,000 catties freight, or just 18 tons. They can take no loads up-stream, but on our way down we met many rafts being arduously tracked up against the current, laden with huge empty wine jars, in which the forty thieves could have found

ample refuge; there being a large wine export from the rich districts of Ya Ngan and Hung Ya.

*September* 20.—All day settling about the boat to go on in. We had written from Ta Chien Lu to the banker on whom we had a credit here, to engage room for us in a boat to leave to-day; we found a large, roomy, laden cargo-boat all ready for us: the deck-cabins, which had been reserved for our accommodation were spacious, fully equal to that of the ordinary Yangtze *kwatse*, but the price to be paid for the week's journey down stream to Chungking, 60,000 cash, was exorbitant; so, finding the captain was immovable, we repudiated the contract and ordered that a small passenger boat should be hired to start on the morrow; negotiations for this were almost concluded when the original skipper offered to take us for half the sum the banker professed to have agreed for, and so on we went.

# CHAPTER XVI

## FROM KIATING BACK TO CHUNGKING

LEAVING Kiating—Rapid Setting on to Rocks—Beautiful Picture in Black and White—Many Buddhas—City of Refuge—Mantse Caves—Colossal Buddha—Sites of Yangtze Cities—Sui Fu—China Inland and American Baptist Missions—Pouring Rain—Dreaded Whirlpool—Buying Sugar at Na Chi—Shouting at Tiger Rapid—Another Colossal Buddha—Luchow the Beautiful—China Inland Mission—Dangerous Rapid—Beautiful Country—Dark-Green Orange Groves—Distilleries — Graveyards — Sugar Cane — River-favoured City — Oranges, nothing but Oranges!—Cat Gorge—Couchant Lion—Siao Nan Hai—Kwanyin's Shrines—Rock Fortress of Fu Tou Kwan—Mooring at the Gate of Great Peace.

*September* 21 we went on board, but only started on September 22, when our *laoda* got his crew together at last and we were off at 7.30, sixteen men rowing us down the swift current. We shot across and passed down the dangerous rapid which sets towards the feet of the colossal Buddha, past the group of red-walled temples and monasteries peeping out through the dark foliage that crowns the purple cliffs, and so all too quickly passed out of Loshan Hien, the district of the "Joyful Mountains," as that of which the city of Kiating forms the centre is well named; and then entered a wide tranquil reach, reminding us, together with the dark Szechuan haze overhead, of Greenhithe reach on the Thames, which it about resembled in size, and in the green wooded hills sloping down to the water's edge. Its Gravesend was below in the shape of a busy shipping town called Tsu Ken T'a (rapid), and immediately below it we drifted down a long continuous rapid, or rather "race," running between lofty boulder banks, to Taosze Kuan ("Taoist

Sanctuary"), a vertical red cliff, with picturesque temple on its summit, and with outlying rocks, upon which the rapid sets direct, and which we shaved by a hair's breadth, notwithstanding most vigorous rowing. We were, however, informed that most junks shaved these rocks as closely, and that not a few came to grief. Below this again was Tieh Shih Pa ("Ironstone Bank"), overhanging red sandstone cliffs, 500 feet to 600 feet in height, crowned by an elegant Buddhist temple, embowered in trees. At ten, we passed the market town (Chang) of Mo Tse, a picturesque place, situated on a low red bluff, and full of trees and temples; behind was a curious knoll of sandstone, its wall-sided top covered with forest, and its steep *talus* terraced to the water's edge; then Cha Ue Tsze ("Spear Fish Point"), a long, big rapid, with high waves setting in to the right bank. We passed more of the thirteeen-storied square pagodas of Indian type, peculiar to this region; and, at three, another picturesque market town, called Ni Chi Chang, Mud-stream Market; an hour later the wide reach of Siao Chia Wan ("the bight of the Siao Clan"), which terminated in an eight-knot rapid, tearing through a hedge of fantastically shaped rocks; to Kan Peh Shu ("Dry Cypress"), a large, busy town, making a really beautiful picture, with its black-and-white houses and many-coloured temples, set in a frame of rich dark semi-tropical foliage, with a back-ground of precipitous mountain, their vermilion and scarlet faces shining through the green vegetation. Wide terraces of bright red sandstone steps lead down to the water's edge, and these were covered with a busy, chaffering crowd, clad to their heels in the long blue gown—*de rigueur* in Szechuan with the commonest coolie—their heads enveloped in blue-and-white turbans. From here on, the hills on both banks closed in upon the river, which ran between a natural stone bunding, terminating in a convenient ledge, raised far above the highest summer flood level, along which ran the highway; above this the steep terraced *talus* piled against the overhanging precipices, their tree-topped summits forming the sky-line. We tied up at sunset in the quiet reach of Tun To

Chi, in heavy rain, having come 290 *li*—say 90 miles—in seven hours.

*September* 23.—Weighed, or rather cast off, into the stream at half-past six, in pouring rain, and, the river immediately below being clear of dangers, the crew were left in comfort under the removable house which protects the fore part of the junk, but which, of course, is ordinarily removed in the daytime to enable them to work the vessel. We passed Chiang Chio Chi, a village set in an amphitheatre of conical hills, looking like gigantic ninepins, below which the river flowed between vertical walls of ochre rocks, in which again were many Buddhas carved in square niches; then past Kuan Tao Chi, a town with an elaborately built *chai*, or walled-in City of Refuge, crowning the summit of the mountain, at the base of which the open village was built. Many *Mantse* caves were cut in the face of the bare bulging rock-cliffs, handsome stone flights of steps led down to the water, and the intervening ravines were spanned by symmetrical stone bridges. Niu Shih Pien ("Ox Stone Side"), another picturesque town on the right bank, with a clear river flowing through it, surrounded with bare hill-tops, covered with unsightly graves, was passed at eight o'clock; then, rounding an orange-cloured cliff, with a colossal Buddha cut in its side, we sighted the important mart of Suifu, situated at the junction of the Min and the Yangtze proper—on the right bank of the former and left of the latter. It was now nine o'clock, and we had thus come 90 *li*, say 27 miles, in three hours.

Suifu, as it is universally called, or Hsu Chow Fu, as it is officially designated, is most advantageously situated at the junction of the two great rivers, the Min and the Kin Sha ("Gold Sand"), which here unite and form the mighty Yangtze. At the time of our visit the Min carried the larger body of water, and its ruddy stream occupied fully two-thirds of the river-bed below the junction, the other third being distinctly defined by the yellow waters of the Kin Sha. This latter has its sources much farther west, and so is termed the main river

by European geographers. Both branches rise in Thibet, the Min coming from the north-west drains the western slopes of the Thibetan plateau by the Tung and the Ya; the north fork, which unites with these at Kiating, drains the mountainous region to the north, of which Sung Pan is the centre, irrigating on its way the celebrated plateau in which stands the provincial capital, Chêngtu. The site of Suifu, at the junction of two large navigable rivers, is analogous to that of Chungking and the majority of the other great cities that line the banks of the "Long River," as the Yangtze is often marked on native maps. And as, too, at Chungking, the Yangtze and the Kialing are locally known only as the Great and Small Rivers—*Ta Ho*, *Siao Ho*—so are the two rivers called here; but it is significant that at Suifu the Yangtze is the Small River and the Min the Big River. Next to Chungking, Suifu counts as the second largest distributing centre in Western Szechuan. It was, further, the most southerly point of our journey; we had come south from Kiating, but we now turned round sharp to the north-east, Suifu being in latitude 28° 40′, and Chungking in 29° 33′.

The view of the city from the river is charming; situated on a steep rocky slope, with a wealth of fine temples, pavilions and gardens standing on rocky points on both sides of the Min; one particularly elegant four-storied building with pierced tracery in its stone basement, and wide, curling, out-jutting eaves projecting from each floor, attracted our attention, and the name of a tower —T'ing-yueh Lo ("Listen-to-the Moon Hall") struck us as being as picturesque as the building which its decorative gold characters graced; we were a little disillusioned on landing, however, to find the place occupied as a distillery. For the continuous heavy rain had decided our *laoda* to tie up here, thus enabling us to go ashore and examine the town. We found wide streets, good shops, and remarked great varieties of very fine bamboo-matting exposed for sale; this is used by the Chinese for sleeping on and rolling up their bed-quilts in, but would make a beautiful and durable floor-covering. The China Inland and

American Baptist Missions have large establishments here, and seem to be on a pleasant footing with the people; we called on the former and were glad to find the members in good case and well satisfied with their location, in the midst of a beautiful country and friendly population.

We got off again at one o'clock, our *laoda* unhousing the forward deck notwithstanding the rain, and started rowing down river. As we turned to the left, rounding the high, precipitous hills which form the opposite point, the green hills that make the back-ground of the city rose up one behind the other, until the whole scene was suddenly cut off from view by the projecting headland, and we entered a tamer but still rich and pleasing country. The valley widened out, giving room for extensive plantations of sugar-cane, the horizon bounded by regular ranges running generally parallel to the river, about 2000 feet or more in height. We passed the towns of Nan Kuang and Li Chuang Pa, both on the right bank, with a very wild rapid running between them, at which lifeboats are stationed; passed more handsome temples with fine trees, mostly the magnificent Hoang Ko lining the water fronts, and, at five o'clock, tied up under the walls of Nan Chien Hsien, having made 110 *li* in four hours.

*September* 24.—The city of Nan Chi is built upon the only piece of flat ground we had yet seen, its well-preserved crenelated walls running straight along the low river bank, behind which projected the curling roofs of many fine temples—some with red, some with black-and-white walls, but all with the elaborate roofs loaded with coloured figures and involved scroll work, so characteristic of Szechuan exuberance. The gates were adorned with two-storied pavilions, and wide stone staircases led down to the water side. It continued to pour throughout the night; the mat roof leaked and my bed was soaked, and the ther mometer fell to 66° as we cast off at early dawn, the black outline of the towers and battlements massed against a half-lit gleaming grey sky. Soon, as the morning coal fires came to be lit, columns of thick yellow smoke ascended on all

sides from the sulphurous coal, and, mingling with the river haze, quickly enveloped the town, obliterating the fine etching pictured to us at the start. We coasted along a fine lofty range on the right bank, running E.N.E. and W.S.W. and sloping steeply down to the water, its crimson flanks covered with fine woods, bamboo groves, and bare patches whence the *kaoliang* (tall millet) had just been reaped—its summit hidden in the clouds. At 8.30 we passed the celebrated rapid and dreaded whirlpool of Ngao Kan Tse, situated a little above the small town of Kua Tan Tse, on the right bank of the river. After this we continued under a high range of steep conical hills on the right bank, about 1000 feet high, and past grand walls of red rock with rich wooded *talus* running down to the water; past rafts of fine bamboo drifting down with large crews of men housed in a shed built amidships, and steered with sweeps of bamboo, their blades constructed of split bamboo woven into a flat surface. At Na Chi Hsien, a busy city on the right bank, we tied up in the rain, our *laoda* and our boy going ashore to purchase sugar, for which this is a great mart. The city boasts a number of temples with red walls and roofs of heavy green and yellow tiles; also an elegant hexagonal pagoda, the Chinese improvement—and a vast improvement it is—on the Indian pattern that prevails from here westwards. As usual near large towns, the hills behind were bare and treeless, entirely abandoned to the elaborate but, when seen in illimitable numbers together, most tiresome and unattractive mausolea, partly hewn out of the rock *in situ*, partly built up of carefully dressed and carved stones quarried alongside. Their monotony was relieved alone by a fine range of turreted temple buildings standing in a walled enclosure on the slope of the hill, and containing many fine trees. The Yung Ning river, as we were locally informed, but the Chung Shui ("Clear Water"), as it is called in maps, falls in here from the south, flowing through a fine wooded ravine. Below the city are a number of bad reefs running parallel with the river bed, across which the current sets in a very dangerous manner,

Falls of Chung Shui into Yangtze.

needing hard rowing and a quick helm to avoid them. Several herons stood on exposed pinnacles of rock, and lifeboats are stationed at the most dangerous points. This rapid is known as the Hu Pa Shian, or "The Tiger." We rushed through at the rate of ten miles an hour, and it was a relief when the shouting ceased and the crew dropped down on the deck to rest, and let the vessel spin her own way in the eddies below. Another colossal Buddha now became visible on the right bank, freshly gilt, reminding one of the big joss (the late Prince Albert) in Kensington Gardens at home. This Buddha *kuans* or guards the rapid of Kwanyin Pei ("Goddess of Mercy Reef"), which flows past his feet. At the foot of the rapid stands the snug-looking market town of Shin Peng Chang, with a fine three-arched bridge with carved parapet spanning a small affluent which here falls in on the right bank. Adjoining is a picturesque temple perched on a rocky bluff, with a handsome flight of steps leading down to the river.

Turning a bend, we now came in sight of the important city of Luchow, built at the junction of the To River and the Yangtze. The To is a large river coming in from the north, and by it is brought down the bulk of the Tse Liu Ching salt. We had crossed it some fifty miles up, at Nei Kiang, on our way to that curious region of "Self-flowing Wells." The main stream of the Yangtze, already reddened by the contributions of the Min, is dyed a still deeper purple by the addition of the To. Luchow, "The Beautiful," stands on the left bank of the To, facing the descending stream, which thus pours forth its wealth at its doors, and the town presents a noble appearance as it stands on rising ground looking up the reach. The configuration of the ground is such that, to a traveller bound down, it looks as though the voyage was to be continued up the wide To River, as the main stream of the Yangtze impinges straight on the north and south range and is deflected sharp off to the right, turning suddenly south-west. Luchow is built along and up the curve of the hills which form the barrier, and, with its many temples and groves rising tier upon tier from

the water, and its battlemented walls, its height rising behind a mass of orange trees, with steep green mountains in the distance, affords another of the perfect pictures of Upper Yangtze towns, of which we have seen so many, but of which we never tire. On the right bank opposite the city is a fine suburb, dominated by the beautiful monastery called Ta Fo Sze, the "Monastery of Great Buddha," an exquisitely proportioned, three-storied, black-and-white building, resting against steep hill-side and buttressed by wide-spreading wings of lower buildings, all of wood, and surrounded by an extensive and most luxuriant grove of *huangko* (walnut) and other trees, besides the usual firs. We tied up under the walls of Luchow just before noon, and, as our *laoda* had business here, we were given two hours to go ashore and inspect the place. It is seldom that Chinese towns improve on nearer acquaintance, but as regards Luchow, we had no fault to find in this respect: the streets were wide and clean, the shops good, and the people civil. Many trees and gardens were attached to the private residences, or *kung-kuan*, and one of these had been rented by the China Inland Mission, affording them a spacious and pleasing and airy residence. We were glad to hear from Mr. and Mrs. ——, the incumbents of the post, that people and officials were friendly, and that no difficulties had been placed in their way in renting houses or otherwise—a very agreeable state of affairs as compared with that then ruling the treaty port of Chungking. We untied and shot off into the stream again at 2 P.M., passing the suburbs in which stand the Government Salt Gabelle offices and warehouses and a military camp. All the downward-bound salt junks here change their crews.

After rounding the point and watching the picturesque city, with its many-coloured and fantastic roofs, recede into the distance, we dropped down rapidly another twenty miles and came in sight of the old town of Luchow—now abandoned for the more convenient upper site by the water—crowning the summit of a steep hill, about 500 feet high, and of which nothing but the bare walls now remains. Shortly afterwards

we came upon the Kuan Kou, a dangerous rapid, which sets round islands by a rock-infested channel, and where the crew had to row with might and main against the set in order to keep the vessel in the safe north channel. Lifeboats are also stationed here. We moored below the rapid, but in a very strong current, necessitating many stakes being driven firmly into the shore for us to moor to—at a small market town called Li Tu Chi. Made 310 *li*, say ninety-three miles, in ten rowing hours.

In the shops at Luchow we noticed many cornelian necklaces, real and imitation. These and horn combs seemed a speciality there.

*September* 25.—It was dark as our *laoda* cast off into the stream, but the eastern sky looked bright and the clouds high, so we hoped, at last, for a fine day. Our *laoda* evidently intended to make Chungking to-night, if possible, and so save a day's rice for his crew. To do this he would have to make 450 *li* (say 135 miles); but soon after daybreak the rain set in again so heavy that at seven o'clock we tied up under the walls of Ho Kiang Hsien, and the forward house was quickly erected as a shelter for our dripping crew. Ho Kiang, the capital of the district of "United Rivers," is situated on the right bank, at the junction of the Chih Shui ("Flesh-coloured Water") river, which here falls in from the south. The city is small, but prosperous-looking, and stands on rising ground, with a fine stone embankment and broad flights of steps protecting it from the river. The late floods had, however, undermined the masonry, the foundations of which were very poor as compared with the solidity of the superstructure. At ten the sun came out for the first time since leaving Kiating, and we made another start, floating down through the beautiful country, the tall sugar-cane and the dark-green orange-trees set off by the red earth, which, contrasted with the blue sky above, looked a vivid red, especially in the freshly hoed patches now preparing for the opium seed. We had passed in safety the Lien Shih Rapids ("Concatenated Rocks"), and at noon entered a lake-

like expanse—the Chu Kia To ("Reach of the Chu Family") —with a square pagoda, then past the large village of Sung Chai, almost entirely hidden in trees. At two we reached Shih Sên ("Stone Gate"), where the river narrowed to a pass between red cliffs, large decorative inscriptions cut in the rocks on the right bank, and a fine seven-storied pagoda, *pu-ing*, or perfecting the *fungshui* of the left bank. Thence to Chung Peh Sha ("Central North Sandbank"), an agglomeration of towns, stretching a couple of miles along the water front, with many conspicuous buildings—all distilleries. The amount of land in Szechuan given up to the luxuries wine and opium is the despair of the authorities, but a striking evidence of the wealth of the province. The hills behind were hideous with a vast expanse of grave mounds, looking in the distance like a sea of green molehills. One sees never a tree in the wide graveyards that surround the cities: the graves are too closely packed to leave room for any vegetation round them, and the graves themselves have to be kept clean, the duty of doing which is strictly inculcated, and for this purpose there are several recurring festivals set apart during the year.

Towards evening we came to the busy town of Yo Chi, on the right bank. Here the strata cease to be horizontal, and a yellow sandstone and shales with crumbling limestone take the place of the red. The strata, running north-east and south-west, and dipping to the south-east at an angle of 25, contain an inferior coal, which is mined in the primitive Chinese manner. We shot the rapid of Lung Men ("Dragon Gate"), turning round twice in the whirlpool below. The land, mostly cleared of the lately reaped maize and *kaoliang*, looked bare, exposing wide surfaces of steep clean red hills, crowned by walls of cliffs, forming natural *chai*, or fortresses. The patches of sugar-cane were scattered about in small symmetrical plantations, the canes planted in bunches, like the paddy in the paddy-fields. It was after dark when we tied up under the walls of Kiang Chi Hsien, a busy town on the right bank, in a reach running north and south, our course to Chungking from

this point being almost due north. Distance, 290 *li* (say 87 miles) in ten hours rowing.

*September* 26.—The roofs of the many red-and-yellow tiled templets and the huge square tower-like pawnshops of the "River-favoured" city glittered in the rising sunshine above the dark walls as we cast off again into the rapid stream. The town is favourably placed, facing and slightly inclined towards the running water, and well screened beyond by a wall of red, orange, and ochre-coloured cliffs on the opposite shore; the slopes above these covered by a forest of orange trees, with rich-looking farm houses, white, with black-tiled and highly decorated roofs, embodied in groves of tall, curving, feathery bamboos, whose delicate tracery is outlined on the white walls, peeping out from amongst the rich foliage. A lofty thirteen-storied pagoda stands conspicuous on a very steep conical bright red mountain on the left bank—one of the peaks of a range rising to about 1200 feet, all cultivated to the summit. The right bank here is comparatively flat, low hills only rising behind the town.

The valley now soon became filled up with the thick yellow coal smoke of the breakfast fires, and we had to turn the next bend before we again got a view of the surrounding scenery. Tungkuanyi ("Stage of Imperial Couriers") was the next place that arrested our attention, a picturesque town situated in a rocky bight. A huge erratic cubical rock mass lay on the bank before the town—"It grew there," said our Chinese—in which was a recess with a gilded Buddha carved in it, *kuan*-ing the river. Oranges, and nothing but oranges, covered the steep hills on both sides of this reach, with fine many-winged farm houses scattered among them. It was eight o'clock as we shot round a corner and entered the Mao Er Hsia, or "Cat Gorge," again named after a stalactite on its walls. The scenery suddenly becomes very wild, the walls are vertical, and coal mines reappear. The towing-path runs high up the cliff, along a fine cornice road which leads to the entrance of a three-storied temple hollowed out of the cliff—half sandstone, half limestone.

Alongside the temple, an enterprising man has carved out a distillery, which was in full swing as we passed. The face of the cliff is about 400 feet high. A fine lion couchant of harder rock stands detached between the path and the river—a colossal natural monument which it is difficult to believe is not a work of art. Immediately below the gorge the river widens out into a lake-like reach, known as the Siao Nan Hai, or "Small South Sea." Near the left bank is a small, rocky, most picturesque island, beautifully wooded and adorned with a range of temples, much like the celebrated Little Orphan Rock on the Lower Yangtze. The "South Sea" proper is the term under which Buddhists speak of the island of Pootoo in the Chusan Archipelago; the island sacred to the Goddess of Mercy for a thousand years, since the days of the Buddha-revering dynasty of the Tang. Here Kuanyin has her special home and is eminently responsive to prayer; but she has special emanations in smaller "South Seas" which are scattered about through the eighteen provinces, where the devout may hope to gain her intercession more surely than in the innumerable temples in her honour to be found in almost every town. The river here at this season is nearly a mile wide, and the reach is curtained in on the right bank by a "thousand" hills, whose peaks simulate the hundred island mountains around Pootoo. We passed an extensive boulder bank in mid-stream, its lower end planted with the cane; its upper end alive with gold-washers; sugar and gold produced from one shingle bank in the middle of the river by this indefatigable people!

Another picturesque town on the right bank is Ue Tung Chi, "Fish Cave Stream," off which runs out a rocky reef, producing a rapid with a sharp three-feet fall in the middle; then on through reaches bounded by sandstone cliffs, only slightly exposed above their *talus* which falls in slopes, just cultivable, to the water's edge. Then the rock fortress of Fu Tou Kuan loomed up out of the foggy atmosphere of the great city, and before noon we were moored alongside the wide stairs of two hundred steps leading up to the Gate of "Great Peace,"

and a few minutes later were back in the home we had quitted just eighty days before, and down again to the depressing altitude of only 500 feet above sea level. Our river journey from Kiating, a distance of, roughly, 400 miles, with a fall of 500 feet, had occupied little over four days—truly lightning speed.

# CONCLUSION

ADVANTAGES of a Walking Tour—Changed Temper of People—Deep Hold of Buddhism—Safety of Travel—Advantage of Native Dress—Uncommon Steepness—Climate of Szechuan—Gridironed by Streams—Rise of Yangtze—Cost of Journey—Tribute Verse—The Snow-guarded Treasure Peaks—Road to the Capital—Marco Polo's Sindafu—Chinese Degeneration—Manchu City—Main Yangtze according to Chinese—Irrigation of Chengtu Plain—Mantze Villages—Kueichow Ponies—Thibetan Sheep—Yaks—City of Sungpau—Foreign Missions—Dyangla Source of Yangtze—First Acquaintance with Sifan—Their Villages—Sifan Eccentricities—Hearths, Tsamba—Order and Neatness — Morals — England's Fear of Responsibility — Brick Tea—Chinese Destruction of Timber—Diminished Rivers—Snow-guarded Peaks — Crossing the Mountains — Hundreds of Green and Blue Marble Basins—Spick and Span Shrines—The Shrine of the Snow Mountains—Junction with the Suiking River—Natural and Artificial Obstacles to Traffic—Quartz Mining—Likin Examinations—Transit Passes—Lungen City—Magnificent Gorge—Eagle's Cliff—Amphitheatre of Limestone Mountains — Roman Catholic and Friends' Missions—White Salt—Private Salt Wells—Filth and Opium.

THUS ended what we both agreed was the most delightful and interesting tour we had ever made. The setting out into the unknown was an undertaking, but, as our journey progressed, we gained health and confidence, and proved the great therapeutic virtue of continuous exercise in the open air. We soon learned to despise the real discomforts of Chinese inns, their dirt and their innumerable inhabitants of the human and other species. Compared with a tour in Europe, one enjoys the inestimable advantage of having no railway to tempt one to deviate from the strict path of rectitude, comprised in walking or riding the allotted distance; and no luxurious hotels

encouraging one to loiter by the way or eat one's self into indolence. The scenery comes home to one, as it can only do on a walking tour; one comes in contact with people and with nature in a way that modern facilities of travel rarely allow the traveller in a foreign country to do. And if these people are not all that could be wished, still, it must be admitted that they form a study of endless interest, and that much can be learnt from them. Of those whom we had occasion to employ, I can but speak in the highest terms. The good temper and obliging disposition of our followers was unfailing, notwithstanding hard work, wet, hurry, and discomfort, most trying to Chinamen. Unfortunately, the fear amongst the upper and learned classes that has been aroused by the unprecedented activity of various missionary bodies that have invaded this province of late years has led to misrepresentations of our objects, and to the circulation, by the more unscrupulous, of downright falsehoods about us. The desired effect in frightening the common people and alienating them from us has been attained only too successfully; and it is sad to one who, like myself, travelled in the province ten years ago, before this influx, to note the difference. Then I never heard an uncivil word; now one is constantly jeered at by the rabble, and a favourite amusement of the small boys in the villages round Chungking is to draw crosses in the path, hoping that the advancing pedestrian may not dare to tread on them. The erection by the missions in Chungking, in conspicuous sites, of strange-looking buildings, which interfere with the so strongly implanted *fungshui* superstitions of the natives, was one of the main causes of the Chungking riots of 1886. Whatever be the cause, the temper of the people is entirely changed for the worse, and successful unpunished rioting has deeply lowered the *prestige* we formerly enjoyed.

One of the first things which impresses the traveller, apart from the fertility of the soil and the plentiful rainfall, with the resulting prosperity of the population, is the deep hold that Buddhism has taken and the marked traces of direct Indian influence. Scarcely a rock—and Szechuan is all rock—that

has not its Buddhist carving; not a hamlet without its temple, nor a house without its shrine. Hardly a day but worship in some form or other is being carried on; and the consumption of incense, sycee paper, and accessories maintains large manufactories, some containing hundreds of workmen. No one can assert that the Chinese are not a religious people in this province, and Buddhism, as established in China, is a pure humanising creed, entirely free from the monstrosities and occasional obscenities of Hinduism; thus the idea of eradicating it root and branch, as the worship of the devil, which some good missionaries proclaim it to be, certainly seems to me not following the teaching of St. Paul.

Another fact, not usually credited at home, is the safety of travel in China. No weapons of defence are required, and, except on one occasion, when I needlessly burdened myself with it, my revolver was always packed away in my trunk. It is, of course, right to have a passport, but it is never asked for, and I have made long journeys without one. The *sine quâ non*, as in any country, is to speak the language. Misunderstandings generally arise through the arrogance or greed of one's native servants. The European traveller in China is *ipso facto* a reasonable man, and he will find an eminently reasonable people to deal with; but, if he is unable to understand them, he is liable to get into difficulties in the most innocent and unforeseen ways.

The European, away from the coast, attracts far less notice in native dress, and, after having made trial of both in many long journeys, I am now persuaded of the advisability of discarding one's foreign garb when passing through populous Chinese regions. On the thinly peopled frontier, and among the wild tribes, or in Thibet, European dress commands equal respect, besides being better suited to hard travel, and far more suitable to the climate, but by the Chinese unaccustomed to it, it is regarded as both unbecoming and indecent, and a traveller moving in it is fair game for the missiles of the *gamins* and the attacks of the ubiquitous dogs.

Entrance of Ancient Temple in Szechuan.

A great deal of the beauty of the scenery is due to the uncommon steepness of the mountain slopes and the number of isolated peaks. All the way from Ichang westward, as far as the Thibetan plateau, there is no tame undulating country. In Szechuan the roads go up and down by steep staircases, and each short climb brings one to a new point of view. Most of the heights are crowned by temples, and the priests, whatever their shortcomings in other respects, deserve the thanks of the traveller for having preserved the surrounding trees from destruction.

The climate of Szechuan is temperate, and the great extremes that characterise the eastern and northern provinces are not felt in this favoured region. Indeed, the absence of gales, or even strong winds, is most remarkable. The mountain tops form no exception, and this renders them such pleasant summer resorts. Szechuan is a wide basin surrounded by high mountains; beyond these the gales blow; but here we are in a sort of Sargasso Sea, where the clouds accumulate, but the wind that drives them is as unfelt as it is invisible. To the south the province of Yunnan—well named "South of the Clouds"—is a sunny, windy region, entirely free from the mists and fogs which are almost perpetual in Szechuan. Occasionally a north-west wind drives back the curtain westward for a time and the sun comes out with the full power proper to the latitude, but these occasions are rare, and, as a rule, a hazy hot-house air prevails and the sun's fiercest rays are moderated by the mist. Hence the beauty of the rich green vegetation all the year round; the brown, parched look of China generally, after midsummer is past, being never noticeable here. The rainfall is evenly spread and seems specially adapted to the constant succession of crops all the year round. The bulk of the rain falls at night, rendering the morning air fresh and fragrant, and although the heaviest showers are in summer, during the prevalence of the south-west monsoon, as throughout Southern Asia generally, the winter is not a season of almost absolute drought, as in the neighbouring regions. The great and sudden

rises in the numberless rivers that water the province, and which find their combined expression in the summer floods of the mighty Yangtze, are due mainly to bursts of rain on the peripheral mountains rather than to an excessive or ill distributed rainfall in the basin itself. This basin of Szechuan (literally "Four Streams," but which, reading the character idiographically, I should be inclined to render as "Gridironed by Streams"), if not a region of perpetual spring, may be said to have only two seasons, spring and summer; frost is unknown; snow falls occasionally on the hill-tops, but it never lies there, although of the mountains that form the edge of the basin many rise above the snow-line. The annual rise of the Yangtze is still frequently attributed to the summer melting of this snow, but, apart from the fact that snow and ice dissolve slowly, while the rises of the Yangtze are sudden and short-lived, the coincidence of the rise with the period of the monsoon rains is a sufficient explanation; and, as we have seen, the great rise of July 1892 came from a tremendous downpour in Northern Yunnan, which wrought great destruction in the province and flooded the south fork of the great river which there forms the northern frontier of Yunnan.

While Szechuan thus enjoys a comparatively temperate and equable climate, the neighbouring province of Hupeh, on the east, situated in the same latitude, is subject to violent extremes of heat and cold, flood and drought; but, as the bulk of the crops are grown on the wide plain irrigated by the Yangtze and its affluents and the mountains are mostly uncultivated, dearth is seldom suffered; on the other hand, the once rich provinces to the north of Szechuan—Shênsi and Shansi—appear to suffer from a condition of permanent desiccation, and recurrent famines are the result, a calamity seldom suffered in Szechuan, notwithstanding the fact that, outside the famous Chêngtu plateau, there is no level land for the indispensable paddy, and that its terraced mountain sides are entirely dependent for irrigation on the local rainfall.

It may be interesting to add that the total cost of our eighty

days outing and some 1300 miles travel amounted to 381,000 copper cash, equal, at the exchange at the time of our start, to £54 sterling, no small portion of which was expended in the portage of the aforesaid copper cash, or of the silver with which it was purchased.

And now I will wind up the lengthy record of a journey which gave us so much pleasure with a copy of the tribute of rhyme which I presented to the Abbot of Omi, *more Sinensi.* For it is the custom of literary pilgrims to present scrolls of their own composition—more especially of their caligraphy—in prose or verse, to any celebrated shrine they may visit. In the present instance the English words were my autograph, but I had an elegant Chinese translation affixed and the whole pasted on a silken scroll, or "Kakemono," which I trust future visitors may find still decorating the Abbot's reception-room. The sentiments, inspired by the surroundings, were much appreciated by the holy man.

## FAREWELL TO OMI.

Adieu, sweet mountain girdled with the snow,
Fair type of Buddha's humanising creed,
Which some would silence. Rather I would know
How best thy "Law" to spread in life and deed.

Who knows? From thy green slopes to heights beyond
Perchance a loftier faith may lead some time:
To-day thy pilgrims hold thy memory fond:—
The snowy peaks are strange and hard to climb.

## THE SNOW-GUARDED TREASURE PEAKS. SHUEH PAO TING.

Such is the name given by the Chinese to the high peaks near the Eastern end of "The Great Snowy Range" (Ta Shueh Shan)—the sea of lofty mountains which hems in the province of Szechuan from the outer world on the west and north.

Mounting up through the defiles by which it is pierced in more than one direction, the traveller arrives at last on the high rolling plateau from which I date this letter:—

Djangla, *October* 3, 1897.

Here, in the open, on the edge of the great Thibetan plateau—the Ts'ao-ti, grass land, or "prairie," of the Chinese—at over 10,000 feet above sea-level, and with the thermometer marking 38°, it is hard to realise that I left Chungking barely a month ago, stewing in the damp heat of its close valley at a temperature of 98°. Were there a railway, such as brings Calcutta within 48 hours of Darjeeling and the Himalayan snows, the contrast would be still more marked. However, as things are in China, the voyage hither, long and troublesome though it be, is not the least interesting part of the excursion—an interest which is lost in the rapidity of railway travel—and so I do not regret being compelled to journey in what our posterity will doubtless call prehistoric times, given that opportunity for those close and leisurely observations of the country and people, which progress at a maximum daily rate of 20 miles (English) has enabled the writer to collate for the benefit (he trusts) of stay-at-home readers.

I have again traversed the land road from Chungking to the capital of the province, running in a N.W. direction, generally over hilly, broken, sandstone country, and, in particular, across four limestone "cross ranges," 2000 to 3000 feet high, such as traverse Szechuan throughout, in parallel folds of extraordinary regularity, in a S.W. to N.E.ly direction. The "road," as behoves a country of perpetual rain, is well paved, being mostly a succession of steep stone staircases. Paddy fields are terraced up the slopes, and only near the summits of the ranges crossed does one find a little wood, and occasionally really picturesque scenery: the cultivation is so close and so persistent that no room is left for trees, hedges, or grass-plots, and only round the farm-houses are to be seen bamboo groves and a few fruit-trees, chiefly walnut and apricot. The noble

Huang-ko, banian (*Ficus infectoria*), spreads its thick shade over isolated hill-tops and gaps, where are local shrines and resting-places for the tired coolies who take the place, as carriers, of the rail and waggon of the West; and by whom, in these western provinces of Szechuan, Yunnan, and Kueichou, thousands of tons of merchandise of every description, native and foreign, are annually transported over these busy provinces at enormous expense to the merchant, although yielding but a bare and poor subsistence to the porter. As an instance, the freight from Chungking to Tali, in the neighbouring province of Yunnan, amounts to Tls.60 per ton, and this want of proper roads, and not the much abused likin, is the real obstacle to a more extensive trade and consequent greater consumption of "Western" manufactures.

Chêngtu, the capital, is thus reached in eleven days, after lodging nearly every night in a walled city, the latter part of the journey being up the valley of the To, or Chungkiang, or Central River of the Chêngtu plateau, which debouches into the Yangtze at Luchou, about 100 miles above Chungking. We leave this valley at the flourishing city of Kienchou and cross the last intervening limestone range by a pass 2500 feet high, descending again 1000 feet into the Chêngtu plain, and at 30 *li* from this, its southern boundary, entering the walls of the city itself. I will not dwell long on Chêngtu, though it is the residence of the Viceroy and an ancient city, with a great history. The modern town is little more than a vast aggregation of streets, in which the dirt and crowds of Szechuan towns generally appear to reach their culminating point. It is hard to believe that this place is the Sindafu of Marco Polo, which he paints in such glowing colours. China must have shockingly degenerated in 600 years if (as there is little reason to doubt) the account given of the place by the great Venetian is at all accurate. Many and wide-sweeping are the revolutions which have devastated the province in the interval, and it is probable that outside the vast palace of the old Szechuan kings, now used as the examination hall, not a single building of the Han,

Sung, and Yuen periods is now in existence. At the present day the Chinese, rich and poor, appear to be living from hand to mouth, to build nothing beyond the absolutely necessary and to repair nothing; debilitated by the universal opium smoking and other vices, they appear to lack both means and energy to take an interest in anything beyond their daily material wants. The large Manchu city at the west end is of special interest: to traverse it one emerges from the network of the densely populated streets and alley-ways of the Chinese town into what has the appearance of a wide park. The scattered houses of the Manchus are tumbled-down enough, but, surrounded by trees and grass-lawns, untidy though they be, the place has a sylvan and cheerful appearance; the women with their unbound feet are tall and robust, and the men, though, by all accounts, a lazy, worthless lot, are healthier looking and more manly than the pallid creatures their Chinese neighbours.

Leaving Chêngtu by its west gate, an almost perfectly straight and level path of 120 *li* (30 miles according to Gill) takes the traveller to the northern boundary of the plateau and to the city of Kuan. Kuan-hsien is situated at the foot of the vast range of mountains (culminating in the snow peaks of Hsueh Paoting, 22,000 feet high) which rise abruptly from the northern edge of the plateau, and at the mouth of the gorge whence issues the celebrated Kuan-hsien river by which the Chêngtu plateau is irrigated. This river, which has its source in the "grassland," not far from the place where I now write, flows through the frontier trading-town of Sungp'an, and thence falls 7000 feet in a distance of 200 miles to Kuan-hsien, where it at length becomes navigable and is known to foreign geographers as the Min river. By the Chinese it is regarded as the Takiang, or main river, as distinguished from the Siaokiang or Kinshakiang ("River of Golden Sand") with which it unites at Suifu, farther 200 miles below. The Chinese esteem this as the main river owing to the great amount of traffic it carries, the longer branch, or Yangtze proper, as we call it, being practically unnavigable above Pingshan, whither

it flows in stupendous gorges through wild, practically uninhabited mountains.

The Chêngtu plain is irrigated in all directions by the water distributed at Kuan-hsien through innumerable channels large and small, scarcely a farm or field in the rich plateau being without its special rivulet—the whole most scientifically organised by a system of dykes, sluices, culverts, and viaducts. At times one stream is carried across another running in an opposite direction. As the Chêngtu plain, although apparently level, rises 800 feet in the 30 miles between the capital and Kuan-hsien, these streams are all rapid, and, with their incessantly renewed supply of pellucid water, flowing through the towns and villages, form a wonderful and pleasing contrast to the black slush one has to wade through in the lower Szechuan towns outside this favoured district. A special Taotai has charge of the irrigation works, which were perfected by a man named Li, in the Han dynasty, and his son, known as Li Erh Wang ("Li the second prince"), whose temples adorn the heights above Kuan-hsien at the mouth of the artificial gorge said to have been cut by the latter. Under any circumstances, he was a man of wonderful insight for his time; he has left on record the admirable dictum, engraved on a rock in his temple, "Dig out the channels; do not raise the banks," and this, his command, has been religiously obeyed every year of the two millennia that have since elapsed. This is effected by Chinese cheap labour, the water-course being temporarily diverted in the winter season by dams of wickerwork filled with boulders —gigantic sausages adjustable by hard labour—and the beds then dug out, section by section, by gangs of coolies.

To reach Sungp'an from Kuan-hsien the ravine is entered by an easy path along the river bank, when suddenly a steep ascent up a roughly paved path takes one over a pass of 5000 feet, whence one descends into the Mantse country. The ravine through which the river flows is inhabited by Chinese who occupy towns along the stream, at distances of about three miles apart, as well as the cultivable portions of the

valley where the slopes admit of maize and buckwheat being grown. Beyond these live the Mantse, the aboriginal Thibetan tribes, who were finally driven out of this valley in the reign of Ch'ien Lung, massive stone forts, now mostly in ruins, lining the whole way. On the lofty heights crowning the ravine one sees the romantic-looking Mantse villages, with their lofty square conical towers, often making a most picturesque outline against the sky. As the path ascends we catch glimpses of snowy peaks when the clouds lift in the mornings, notably the range of the "Nine Peaks" (18,000 feet), which shuts off the midway-situated town of Maochou from the Szechuan cloud-region, and, after passing which, we enter the delightful, dry zone, with its clear, cool, bracing air, warm yet innocuous sunshine, clean roads, and houses fragrant of wood smoke and guiltless of the intolerable stenches that make the fortnight's journey from Chungking to Kuan-hsien in hot weather a burden only to be borne in anticipation of the health-giving change of this "Tramontana."

The journey to Sungp'an, from Kuan-hsien, is made in eleven stages; the path is a good one, as Chinese paths go, being wide enough for two to pass in most places and often cut out n galleries high up along the precipitous sides of the defile at a great cost of labour—infinitely superior to the road to Ta Chien Lu which we traversed in 1892. I rode a delightful little Kueichow stallion, a small but typical Szechuan pony, euphemistically called by his *mafu*, or groom, "Mengtse" ("the fast one"). Mengtse is not large, even as China ponies go; he is, indeed, absurdly small, standing only 11 hands 2 inches, but, owing to his bold carriage, looking larger; still one feels some compunction in mounting him until one realises that, as a pack-horse, he has been loaded daily with 250 lbs. of rice, and carried this load safely over the steep mountains that form the frontier range between the provinces of Szechuan and Kweichow for five years on end without apparent injury. His colour is the pure Arab bay, with black points and long black mane and

tail. His head is small, the delicate muzzle in contrast with the broad forehead and well-developed jaw, while his large, prominent, mild eye gives an air of aristocratic serenity to his whole bearing. The neck is beautifully arched and delicately joined to the head. In his paces he exhibits a staglike security of footfall. His back is absolutely perfect, just enough to carry a small saddle, and surmounting a round barrel, long and symmetrical. His thighs and hocks show promise of any amount of strength that may be required of him. Like the horse Abeljar, possibly one of his progenitors, "his legs are as steel and his hoofs as hammered iron."

This splendid little stallion, this miniature Arab, carried me day after day over the rugged and often dangerous trails of the Thibetan border mountains with unflagging spirit and invariable good temper. He was very troublesome when, in a narrow path on the side of a precipitous defile, we met a caravan containing mares travelling in an opposite direction; then, and then only, on the warning bells of native horsemen becoming audible in the distance, the whip had to be sharply applied to his delicate skin and the voice with decision to his expressive ears, when long discipline resumed its sway. I, of course, spared his shapely legs, drumsticks of iron, as much as possible, getting off at the steep descents and easing him at the rough ascents up the rock-strewn bed of almost vertical "nullahs," while immensely lightening my own toil by holding on to his tail, and so being towed up. In the huts below the snow passes, when I took him in at night out of the cold, he would kneel down on the straw beside me and behave like the little gentleman he undoubtedly is by birth and breeding. Whence does this small isolated breed originate, as much distinguished from their coarse surroundings as the manly Sifan race from the loutish crowd of Chinese that have all but exterminated them? Is it possible that these Kweichow ponies are a dwarfed survival from a mob of Arabs brought into China by the Turkish followers of Genghis Khan, who aided him to

overrun the Celestial Empire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries?

These and other ethnographical problems I leave to future explorers to solve.

The traffic along this road is very great. Besides strings of porters (who cost less to feed than mules) toiling along at the rate of 5 or 6 miles per day with frightful loads of brick-tea and shirtings and piece goods for the Thibetans, and all the luxuries of food and dress dear to the Chinese colony at Sungp'an as well—all these bound upwards—we met droves of magnificent long-horned sheep, now in fine condition, fresh off their summer pasturage, and of which 20,000 odd go down each winter to the capital for meat. (We unfortunates in Chungking have to put up with goats' flesh. The Thibetan sheep barely survive the low altitude of Chêngtu, 1500 feet above the sea; we in Chungking are 800 feet lower.) We also met droves of *yak* (the hairy ox), driven by wild-looking, though gentle-mannered *Si-fan* (literally "Western savages"), *i.e.*, Thibetans going down empty to Kuanhsien, there to load up with brick-tea for the return journey; mules with packs of wool on each flank, troublesome, and often dangerous to pass; besides innumerable loads of every sort and description of drug for which the Thibetan borderland is, in the Chinese Pharmacopœia, most famous. All to the accompaniment of the roaring torrent some hundreds of feet below.

Sungp'an is a walled city of about 10,000 inhabitants, half Chinese and half Mahomedan, these latter markedly noticeable for superior cleanliness and neatness in their homes. The city is governed by a Sub-Prefect and has a Brigadier-General with 500 men under his orders; it stands 9500 feet above sea level, or almost 2000 feet higher than Ta Chien Lu and Darjeeling, and is one of the highest business cities in the world. Its climate is perfect at this season, and even in the depth of winter the cold is not excessive; snow falls, but rarely lies above six inches, as it thaws and dries in the winter sunshine. The river carries floating ice, but the winds are not as severe

as they are upon the Thibetan plateau proper. In the height of summer the people wear wadded clothes and now they are all wearing skins. The Erhfu, or second magistrate, who had lived many years at Lhassa, told me that the climate of Sungp'an is much the same as at that now inaccessible city. Lhassa stands 2000 feet higher than Sungp'an, but in 3° lower latitude.

The streets, or rather the one busy main street, of Sungp'an are crowded with Sifan (Thibetan) men and women in their picturesque, though dirty, embroidered sheepskins, bringing in produce from the surrounding mountains—butter, silk, beef and mutton, *tsamba* (barley), and skins. All the well-to-do Sifan ride, their two greatest ambitions being a good horse and a good sword; they are a pleasing contrast to the Chinese in their frank manners towards us, their fellow barbarians, and are as universally polite as is the ordinary low-bred Chinese rude to despised "yang-jên." There are two foreign missions in Sungp'an, one Roman Catholic, one the Thibetan Mission, founded by Miss Annie Taylor, two members of which—Mr. Neave, an Aberdonian, and Mr. Lorensen, a Norwegian—now reside here, engaged in the study of the Sifan dialects. Mr. Polhill Turner, the head of the mission, is at Ta Chien Lu. It will be remembered that Mr. and Mrs. Turner were driven out of this place a few years back with much ignominy, the mob, I am told here, having been instigated in their attack by the Mahomedans, and few or no conversions to Christianity have so far been made in this region.

My landlord here is a Mahomedan, and he told me an interesting story of the memorable siege of Sungp'an in 1862–1863 by the Sifan, of which he is one of the few survivors. The city was closely beleagured for eleven months, during which time the inhabitants were reduced, he said, to eating dead bodies and their skin trunks: at last Sifan let them go, but robbed them of all their clothing. The women drowned themselves in the river which flows through the town. My host, then a lad of 17, escaped, with a few hundred others

over the great snow pass to Lunganfu. The following year the Sifan were besieged in their turn by troops sent up from Chêngtu; the city was recaptured, the defenders all massacred, and the few remaining Chinese inhabitants returned to their homes. Since that event peace has reigned, and the Sifan and Chinese appear to be on a most friendly footing and to carry on a large trade together.

Djangla has a beautiful stream of clear water running through its main street, two feet deep and about six feet wide; a stream, the Chinese say, which is cold in summer and warm in winter; its source is situated half a mile north of the town, where it issues in a constellation of springs, bursting forth out of a soil of limestone conglomerate. This is one of the myriad sources of the mighty Yangtze, and is well named by the Chinese the Po-li-ch'uen, or "Crystal Spring." Djang-la is the last inhabited town on this side the border, and cultivation (potatoes and barley) ceases here. Beyond stretches the vast Ts'-ao-ti, rolling grass downs, the home of the nomad Sifan and of their flocks. The Chinese colony have an ancestral hall here, and in its courtyard I was surprised to find a bush of Moutan hua. I fancy this is about the highest spot in the world where the peony can be found growing in the open-air. Along the stream are numerous large, gaudily painted prayer cylinders, standing under tiled pavilions, turned by the water: every Sifan homestead is adorned with prayer flags of all colours, but mostly bleached white by exposure. Every Sifan carries a brazen casket, containing a Buddha, slung round his neck, and every Lama has his rosary. A more religious people hardly exists; nor one, I should think, more difficult to convert.

*October* 8.—My first personal acquaintance with these *Sifan* was made at Hsintankuan (new rapid fort), two days journey below Sungp'an, where three men, dressed in loose sheepskin robes, the fur inside — and a woman in the same, but embroidered with a wide, red hem, and her head adorned with a garland of heavy yellow stones the size of small apples—called with an offering of fruit. It was just light,

and I was on the point of starting off on the day's journey. They came in bowing politely: one man spoke Chinese, and informed me that they had come on the previous evening, but, seeing me busy writing, had retired. The apples were the only good apples I have tasted in China—rosy and luscious. I gave them a pencil in return, a present all Thibetans much appreciate. In Sungp'an many more called on me, always bearing presents, and a wonderful contrast in their polite, reticent behaviour to the impertinent curiosity of the Chinese. Like the climate, the food at Sungp'an is European in character, and in the cool, bracing air most enjoyable after a long course of Chinese slops. The *Sifan* are the purveyors of this part—mutton, from the sheep just off their summer feed, truly better flavoured than I have ever eaten in London or Paris, sweet fresh butter, and rich cow's milk; Yak beef (hardly equal to English), potatoes and parched barley flour (in Thibetan, "*tsamba*"), which, mixed with tea and butter, makes a tasty and sustaining potage. Later on, in our excursions to the *Ts'ao-ti* (grass country), we were dependent upon *Sifan* hospitality on the road. I was accompanied by a Chinese who lived in Sungp'an, and had traded with the Thibetans for many years, and spoke their language.

The nomads here live in light tents of cotton cloth, while pasturing their flocks in summer on the high plateaus, but their homes are in the villages in the ravines, which, during our visits, appeared to be chiefly tenanted by the women, the men being out with their cattle. The villages are all stockaded, and hence termed *Chai* by the Chinese, each house being in a small farmyard enclosure and guarded by the fierce Thibetan mastiffs, whose deep-toned growl is far more threatening than the incessant bark of the Chinese cur. The houses are built of wood, are two-storied, and roofed either with earth beaten hard or with rough slates resting on close-set wooden rafters. Below are the cattle and above is the human dwelling. In the better-class houses, this comprises a main dwelling-room, on the floor of which is the hearth; an oratory, or shrine, gaudily painted and beautifully kept, and other smaller rooms, not omitting the

latrine, clean and odourless, arranged *à la Japonaise.* The roads up to and through the *Chai* are narrow, muddy paths between palisades, as muddy as a farmyard in Essex: this does not, however, so much matter, as every one is mounted. The first thing upon arriving at the gate is to call upon the lady of the house to chain up the dogs. This done, the gate is opened; we tie our ponies up in the basement and ascend the ladder to the upper floor. At my first visit, my Chinese companion cautioned me that the *Sifan* were a very eccentric people, who, although they were such savages that they had neither chairs nor tables, yet they objected to spitting on the floor, and that to spit in the fire was an unpardonable offence to them. Thus duly warned, I managed to conform to their prejudices in this respect. The dwelling-room has the hearth in the centre, and the smoke escapes through a chimney, with a spreading wood awning or hood at the bottom, similar to that used in the houses of the Alaska Indians; so that one is not blinded by wood smoke as with the Chinese. On the way up to Sungp'an I was often driven out of the inns into the cold and dark outside, waiting until the fires were out before I could venture into bed: it is no wonder that one meets so many Chinese suffering from ophthalmia, and so many blind beggars. The hearth was invariably composed of three large boulders, so arranged that the cooking-kettle rested between them; no suspension is needed, and, with only the three narrow apertures between the stones for the admission of air, the fuel consumption is very moderate. A smiling welcome from the bright, active, rosy-faced women, who remind me of our gipsies in looks and complexion, puts us all in good humour; cushions are placed on the floor round the hearth for us to squat on, and boiling water is at once got ready for the buttered tea: this tea, churned up with butter, with the colour and appearance of cocoa, into which each guest mixes the *tsamba,* stirring it to his taste. The parched barley-flour is passed round in a big wooden box, with hinged lid. On a cold day, I found this a most appetising dish, the empyromatic odour supplied by the parching of the

grain quite annulling the flatness of the buttered tea. The water was stored in large cylindrical vessels of polished brass, showing not a speck of dirt, and on shelves round the room was arranged a display of brightly polished pewter teapots and brass dishes, the neatness and cleanliness of which would do justice to a Dutch *hausfrau*. In the entry, the saddles (and of these every well-to-do Thibetan possesses a large assortment) are arranged in order on saddle-stands, the brass and silver work shining, and the stirrups and bits as bright as elbow polish can make them, and without a speck of rust. If order and neatness are tests, which is farther removed from the primitive age, the Chinese or the Sifan? If manly carriage, good manners, frankness of demeanour and self-respectful bearing be a test, then every European will unhesitatingly give the despised *Sifan* the first place. Certainly their hospitality to travellers, for which they resent the offer of any remuneration in return, is to-day a pleasing feature which, I suppose, must unfortunately need disappear as civilisation advances and population increases.

The *Sifan* are said to be loose in their morals, and Marco Polo has described their country as "a fine place for young fellows." If this be the case (and I had no means of judging) then I can only say that, their reported laxity notwithstanding, the men are good-looking and the women frank and well-mannered, while the superior chastity of the Chinese produces, seemingly, just the opposite result. It would require a good knowledge of the language and years of intercourse really to understand how their polyandry works in practice, and even then one would hardly be justified in dogmatising on such a subject. All testimony is unanimous on one point, however, viz., that the women, if they indulge in amours, never sell their bodies for money in the way the Chinese and the women of other countries—called civilised—do. What a sad pity that the late Macaulay Mission to Thibet should have been compelled to shed the blood of these people! But still sadder that such bloodshed should have been utterly sterile, and that the Mission

should have been recalled when within a few marches of Lhassa. Had the foreign advisers of the Chinese in Peking not been listened to, and had the Mission been allowed to proceed, Thibet would be open to us to-day, and I feel sure that free intercourse would result in our countrymen in India (who need Thibet as a real sanitarium) being friends with the Thibetans, such as we can hardly become with a crafty, astute people like the Chinese—to please whom the Mission was recalled when it had already advanced within three days of Lhassa. How long will our Indian Government persist in vain endeavour to conciliate the Chinese by concessions to their *amour propre?* We seem to fear to tread in the steps of India's first great Viceroy, Warren Hastings, who, as we know, sent a successful mission to the Teshu Lama as long ago as 1774. This digression is inevitable, when one is on the Thibetan border and feels the way barred to farther progress, simply owing to the lack of that enterprise and fearlessness of responsibility which distinguished our great forefathers. As Jules Ferry said, China is a *quantité négligeable*, and (at least, in the Thibetan question) should be so regarded.

This is the season when herds of patient yaks are beginning to come into Sungp'an with wool to be bartered for the brick tea which strings of toiling coolies are slowly carrying up from Kuan-hsien, a porterage of 200 miles, occupying them over a month, and more than doubling the first cost. Nothing is more marvellous than that the Thibetans should prize this amalgamation of stalks and sticks, mingled with a few big brown autumn leaves, as they do. All the good leaves are first picked for Chinese consumption, and, as a tea taster, I venture the opinion that the Thibetans would be equally well off if they mixed their *tsamba* and butter with plain hot water.

Sungp'an, with all its amenities as I have described them, is a desolate-looking, unpicturesque place, owing to the absolute dearth of trees. The mountains round are denuded even of their shrubs, such is the scarcity of fuel. Sungp'an means "Fine River," and my Fu-t'on (head coolie-man) on the way

up informed me that when, in Ch'ien Lung's reign (early in the eighteenth century), the country was definitely opened up by the Chinese, the troops had to cut a road through dense pine forests, which then lined the banks of the Sungp'an river all the way from Kuan-hsien and covered the surrounding mountains; but now, in China, wherever there is a stream that will float a log, there are no longer any logs to float. Père Amand David, who spent years on the Thibetan border, comments bitterly in his *Journal de mon troisème voyage* on this locust-like propensity of the Chinese to destroy every green thing wherever they penetrate, for when the trees are gone comes the turn of the scrub and bushes, then the grass, and at last the roots, until, finally, the rain washes down the accumulated soil of ages, and only barren rocks remain. This fact accounts for the diminished rainfall, the lessened rivers, and the not unfrequent droughts in Szechuan proper, droughts formerly quite unknown in this favoured province, but now, it seems, of constant occurrence in one district or another. These droughts are the talk everywhere. Maochou, situated in a grand open valley at only 5000 feet above the sea level, formerly produced rice in abundance, but now only "dry" crops. In North-East Szechuan, in the "red basin," situated at the foot of the mountains, there have now been three successive seasons of drought, and the Chinese speak of this autumn's harvest as only a "two-tenths crop." The diminished size of the rivers is very marked everywhere, and fully accounts for the disappearance of Marco Polo's magnificent bridge at Chêngtu, where "the Great Khan had his Commer, bringing in 1000 gold pieces daily." When the monsoon rains do come they produce great torrents and temporary floods, which subside as suddenly as they arise, after doing great devastation, and which the Chinese call *Ch'u-chiao* ("Eruption of the Dragon"). When I say that Sungp'an is utterly destitute of trees, I forget an avenue of magnificent cedars in the courtyard of the temple of the tutelary city divinity. This shows that the soil and climate are fit for coniferæ; yet even these fine trees, should I visit Sungp'an

a wood fire, at which we are glad to warm our chilled hands and feet and accept a drink of boiling water. We are now on the east or Chinese side of the Hsueh Pao-ting from which this valley immediately descends. I climbed up a few hundred feet behind the temple in the hope that the clouds would disperse and give me the front view: they did so partially, but not enough to disclose the summits. Speaking of ruinous temples, what a contrast in this respect are the Thibetan shrines to the Chinese! In the former everything spick and span, as in our Christian churches, the pulpit for the Lama to read from, the benches and cushions for the worshippers, the clean pillars and walls, liturgical books neatly stowed away in cabinets, the orderly arranged pictures, and the whole under lock and key. Certainly they cannot compare with the Chinese in true artistic feeling, nor in elegance of design; the lamaserais are gaudy, but tawdry, as indeed are so many Roman Catholic shrines in Southern Europe. But they are kept in good order, paint is not spared—rather employed in too great profusion; whereas the Chinese seem never to repair anything, temple, road, or bridge, until it falls into such a state of decay that it has to be rebuilt entirely, or else, as is in these degenerate times more often the case, abandoned as a hopeless ruin. How is it that æstheticism seems to be everywhere correlated with moral decay, while Philistinism is synonymous with strength and solidity?

Yet we were told that this Huang-lung Sze, which looks as though it could hardly stand another winter, is, in the month of July, a great resort of Thibetan pilgrims from across the Pass, who then camp here in thousands, bringing offerings of their native produce to the shrine of the sacred mountain—the Hsueh Pao-ting—of which mountain I trust some Whymper or other adventurous Alpine climber will ere long attempt the ascent, and then let us know the true height and extent of this snowy range.

*Tsungpa, October* 17.—I am now at the end of my land journey and on board a junk bound down stream direct for

Chungking, 200 miles distant S.S.E. This place is the head of the navigation proper of the western branch of the Kialing, which is known on our map as the Fo-kiang, but then geographical names of rivers appear to be always unknown to the inhabitants, who at every junction of two streams have simply their Ta-ho and Siao-ho, the big and little rivers. We have so far been following down the Fo-kiang from its source, this side the Great Snow Pass, a distance of some 300 miles, to its junction with the Suining river on the North-west. The united waters of the two streams render this, the Suining river (so named from the large mart and district city, Sui-ming-hsien, 50 miles lower down), navigable here for large cargo junks, the stream above being prevented by the numerous rapids and shallows from being navigable by other than small boats of very light draft. The first boat I saw on the river was at Chinchou, 140 miles from its source, 2600 feet above the sea, and 800 feet above this place, which again stands 800 feet above the level of Chungking. But here the larger body of water renders the rapids passable by junks, like this one, drawing 4 feet of water and over 100 feet in length. Indeed, all the fine rivers that intersect the rich province of Szechuan, fed by the perennial streams from the snowy range, are well adapted for steam navigation. The traffic is enormous, but has to suffer intolerable delays, not alone from the natural obstacles, where man-power alone is employed, but from the artificial obstacles of the ubiquitous likin stations.

About half-way between Sungp'an and the prefectural city of Lungên, near a small picturesque village called Siaohoying (small river or side-stream camp), I noticed, all at once, a thick, yellow, muddy stream, which I had to ford on my pony, take the place of the pellucid burns and torrents, which had been the invariable accompaniment of the journey all round from Kuan-hsien and over the Pass. This I at once saw must come from gold washing, and, on looking round, I distinctly traced a vein of white quartz rock in the dark shales through which the stream has here cut out a deep gorge—and which vein, with several

others seen later on, the river has equally cut through. I followed up the side stream, and about 300 feet above, where the slippery shale path ascends the shifting precipitous slope of the main river bank, I found a dozen Chinese engaged in quartz mining. They were pounding the quartz with a pestle and mortar: the mortar of stone and the pestle of wood iron-shod; the mortar some 3 feet in diameter, the heavy pestle worked by four men. They said they gained each 100 to 200 cash per day on the average; sometimes a lucky day gave them 1000 or 2000! Here is a rich field undeveloped. From what I have seen hereabouts, and, in fact, all along the Thibetan border right round from Sungp'an to Ta Chien Lu, auriferous quartz is present in great quantities. And its development may enable China ere long to follow Japan in introducing a gold currency, thus assimilating herself to the rest of the civilised world, and putting an end to the terrible vagaries in exchange which of late years have made life in China, to the business man, anything but a path of roses. But, so far, the Chinese officials, in this province at least, are extremely jealous of any foreign help in developing their industries, and we may have long to wait before Szechuan emerges from its present state of poverty and opium intoxication.

*Hochau, November* 3, 1897.—We are now within a day's boat journey, 200 *li*, of Chungking, but have to wait till morning before we can clear at the native customs, which has more red tape and vexatious delays to trade than custom-houses generally. Twice each day since we left Taihochên have we had to pull up for likin examinations, for salt, opium, and other goods: the amounts payable are trifling from a European point of view, but the delays are exasperating to any but Chinese. Thus, of the four days journey down-stream from Taihochên to this place, I find I have spent fully one whole day at likin stations—moored alongside the unsavoury foreshore of dirty Chinese towns. This likin business is worse than ever since the Japanese war, the stations being multiplied daily on every river, road, and footpath in the country: they tax the inter-

change of products between the neighbouring towns in the most cumbersome way—a nuisance to the people and small profit to the Government. Riding on ahead of my porters in the neighbourhood of Mienchau, I pulled up at a likin station, a small thatched shed in a grove of bamboos, and, having been politely invited to enter and sit down, I beguiled the time watching the working of the office. The peasants were carrying their tobacco into Mienchau for sale: upon each load of 60 catties a tax of twenty-six cash, about three farthings sterling, was collected; each payment necessitated the writing out of a receipt in triplicate upon elaborate printed forms in red and blue type, besides the inevitable haggle over the quality of the cash paid. I inquired how many men were required to run this tax station and what was the average daily collection. Five men and one thousand cash (two shillings) were the answers. I remarked that the Viceroy could not get much out of 30,000 copper cash a month after his five clerks had been fed and paid. They laughingly replied: "On some days we do better and collect even 2000 cash or more."

This part of Szechuan produces principally sugar, indigo, tobacco, aconite (now exhibiting their tall stalks and purple flower), silk, cotton, and every kind of cereal (opium is little grown in North Szechuan). Wool, duck-feathers, and pigs'-bristles are collected for export, and everywhere detained *en route* by the innumerable likin stations. So far foreign merchants in Chungking, interested in articles of export, have found transit-passes no remedy owing to the troublesome formalities attending their issue, and the declaration (under pain of confiscation) of the exact quantity intended to be purchased and other similar devices apparently purposely planned to render them nugatory. When will some reformer arise with a real grasp of the subject and the necessary power to put the finances and currency of China in order, and so increase the revenue while lightening the burden on the impoverished people? So far the foreign custom-houses *at inland ports*, with their addition of the obnoxious half-duty, have only increased the

burdens upon inland traffic for want of a comprehensive scheme which ought, one would think, to be based on duties collected at the frontiers only, as in all other civilised countries.

But, worried with likin and customs anomalies, we have almost forgotten the Yellow Dragon Monastery which we left, 11,500 feet above sea level, on October 8. Thence the road falls rapidly, descending the valley of the Fo River and falling 8000 feet in the eight days journey of 150 miles to the district city of Chiangyu, which is situated at the entrance to the mountains on this, the north-east extremity of the unique Chêngtu plateau, and at 2200 feet above the sea. The road follows the river through a narrow ravine which expands in a few places and affords "flats" (*Pa* or *ping*) upon which stand the few Chinese towns of the region, the surrounding mountains being still inhabited by the Sifan. Of these the chief are Shuichinp'to (crystal market), a small but busy town, and Lungênfu, the prefectural city, whence a road branches off, up a gloomy side ravine, to Pik'ou on the Kansu border, 40 miles to the north-east. Lungên is a large walled city, with wide, well-paved streets, but comparatively little trade, and has the air of decay which pervades so many imposing-looking cities of Eastern Szechuan. It possesses a Roman Catholic church and numerous handsome but ruinous temples. Lungên stands only 3000 feet above the sea level. Whereas by the western road, from Kuan Hsien to Sungp'an, the ascent is gradual, here, by the eastern road (as the Chinese name it), the fall is sudden, being 10,000 feet in the 90 miles from the Hsuehshan Pass to this city. The road itself is fairly good, especially where it has been chiselled out of the sides of cliffs. It looks dangerous when one gazes down several hundred feet off the unfenced path into the roaring torrent in the abyss below, but there is room to ride in safety with a well-trained animal; on the other hand, where the path descends and runs beside the river, it is a scramble over fallen rocks, very trying to man and beast, and over such ground 15 to 16 miles is a good day's journey. None but the patient Chinese coolie and his compeer the mule

would consent to carry loads of 250 lbs. on their backs over such a path, over which goes half the traffic of Sungp'an.

The approach to Lungên is through a truly magnificent gorge; the most romantic spot is called the Ying-er-ngai, or "Eagle's Cliff." Here steep tree-covered slopes, fortunately inaccessible to the woodmen, reach up to precipitous snow-covered peaks and afford as fine a picture of mountain scenery as can be seen anywhere in the world. At this season trees are in their autumn tints, and the russet maples and tallow-trees, interspersed amidst the dark-green firs, give colour to the view and contrast admirably with the grey rocks and snow peaks towering above. After extending at Lungên, the ravine contracts again, until finally debouching by the Tenglung Hsia, or "Lantern Gorge," into the plain at Kiangyou. The river here breaks its way through a grand amphitheatre of limestone mountains, which rise in abrupt precipices from the plain, evidently cliffs once abutting on an ancient lake, whose bottom, as the waters gradually broke their way through the hills to the south, gave place to the now rich Chêngtu plateau. The wall-like character of the mountains which, running from Kuan Hsien south-west and north-east, bound the plain on the north, is very marked. On the southern border the country is more broken, and, although the ranges here rise to 2000 and 3000 feet, they look like low hills by comparison.

From Kiangyou a day's journey brings us to the flourishing mart of Tsung-pa ("Central Flat"), so called from its situation between two artificially divided channels of the Fo River. This wide "flat"—a peninsular extension north of the main Chêngtu plateau, in which is included the flourishing city of Mienchou—is very fertile, although covered with boulders in parts, and intersected by many dried-up beds of ancient watercourses. At this place the Church Missionary Society have a branch mission, the head centre of the mission being at Paotingfu * in the north-east, the residence of Bishop Cassels.

* This year (1900) the scene of an awful *official* massacre of missionaries.

Here our road south takes us through Mienchau, a flourishing walled city, the centre of a large silk district; then on to the prefectural city of Tungchuan, the seat of a Roman Catholic mission; thence to the pleasantly situated district city of Shêhung, where the "Friends" support a branch mission; then on again by a good road through a fine valley and over a low pass to Taihochên, the head of navigation proper. At this busy town the Roman Catholics have a large establishment, church and schools. All this makes five days land journey from Kiangyou. The upper course of the Fo River, from Mienchou to Taihochên, is lined with innumerable salt-wells, which produce an excellent salt; unlike the greyish-black product of the celebrated Tszeliuching district in the Kiating prefecture, this salt is as white and pure as that from Cheshire, but, when I praise its superior appearance, the Chinese object that it is not as salt as is the latter. This salt sells on the spot for 36 cash per catty (equal to ¾*d.* per lb.), but before it reaches Chungking the price is doubled by the likin to 72 cash per catty. These salt-wells are on the most primitive scale, and being here mostly 200 or 300 feet deep, as against the thousands of feet at Tszeliuching, require but little capital to start and run. Hence each little farmer along the river bank appears to have his private well, at which he and his family raise the brine by a sort of tread-mill. As at Tszeliuching, the brine is raised in a hollow bamboo with a valve at the bottom, and is then evaporated in iron pans—the whole plant costing barely 100 dollars. There being no coal in this sandstone district, the evaporators were being fired by flags. Large expanses of reeds are cultivated on the boulder flats all along the river to provide this fuel, which needs a woman and a boy to be perpetually stoking to keep the fire alight. From the fact of the wells being confined to the valley of the river, it would seem that its water is needed to dissolve the salt iself from the salt-impregnated rock—here all soft red sandstone. At Tszeliuching, on the other hand,

the wells stand on elevated ground, but descend, as I have said, to depths of 2000 to 3000 feet, where they probably touch the bed of a long extinct river, by which the salt has been washed out of the soil and converted into brine. Wherever produced, it is a source of great wealth to the people and of revenue to the Government.

Returning once more to populous and prosperous Szechuan proper, after a delightful fortnight spent in the clean, dry country beyond the pass, I am again oppressed by the filthy condition of the towns and people—a filth which comes home to one most closely in the inns, to which the land traveller is compelled to resort, and rendered the more intolerable by the damp, muggy atmosphere. One wonders how the people live at all in such pigsties as they inhabit; rich and poor alike seem quite insensible to decency or the most elementary cleanliness. Opium is everywhere, and the opium smoker is as callous to appearance as is the drunkard with us; but while drunkenness is happily diminishing in the West, here opium smoking seems to be steadily on the increase. The natives themselves say that seven-tenths of the population smoke, men and women alike. The native opium is mild and much adulterated, and thus not so fatal in its effects; but the apathy and laziness that are its accompaniment demoralise the people much as does drink at home. Add to this the crippled-footed women and the dirty children (instead of those delightful children of picturesque Japan), and you cannot wonder that, on the first night I slept in an inn in the plain, I heartily wished myself back amongst the despised Sifan. I could only console myself by dropping into poetry (realistic, of course) *à la* Silas Wegg; and so I conclude by inflicting on my reader the lines that came into my head as I lay sniffing the pig-sty and vainly trying to sleep. Still, taken as a whole, the journey was a glorious change from the stagnation of Chungking, and the exercise and fresh mountain air as stimulating physically as a trip to Europe. The day will come when railways will give

residents in the steamy plains of China free access to her grand mountains, and then such stories as these of the delays and discomforts of travel in the nineteenth century will be deemed impossible.

*November* 1.

## EPILOGUE.

Back to the damp and the drizzle:
  Back to the filth and the stench:
Back to the pig-sty-cum-cesspool
  And the slatternly small-footed wench!

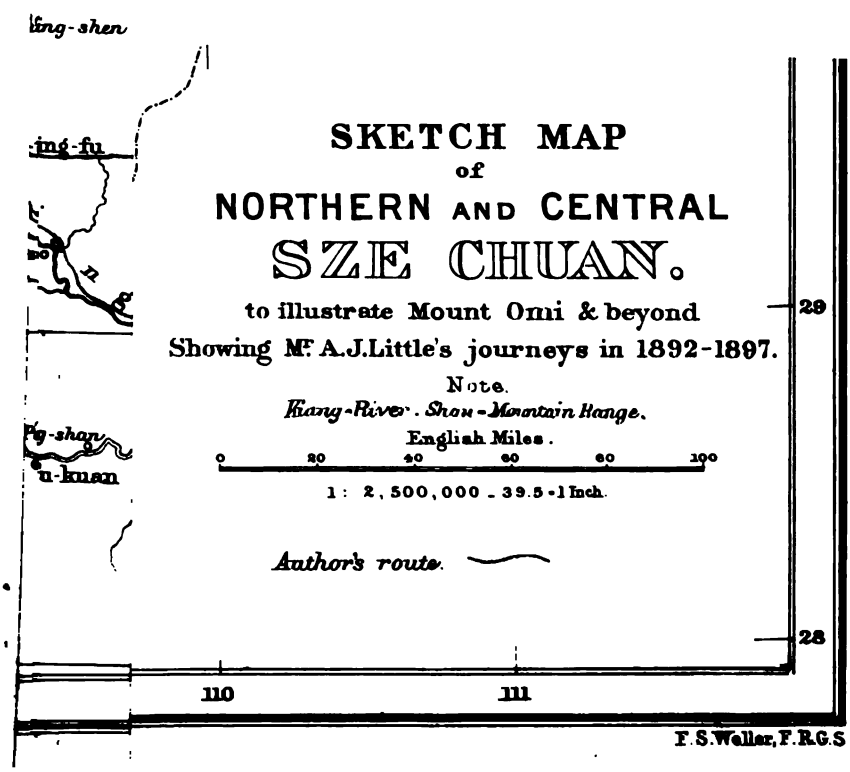
Barbarians—gentle and simple!—
  How I long for your firesides so trim!—
Who treated the Far-Western savage
  As one of your own kith and kin.

Why back to the lice* and the bed-bug
  And the paddy's malarial reek?
Why pitch not my tent on your mountains?
  Why farther for happiness seek?

Too soon have I fled your frank greeting!
  Once more 'mid the sordid Chinese
I yearn for your smile all too fleeting,
  Your *tsamba*, your milk, and your cheese.

Slaves are we who call ourselves freemen;
  Fate urges relentless our feet;
And your health-giving wind-swept plateau now
  Remains but a memory sweet.

* Chinese pronunciation of our word "rice."


ing-shen
ing-fu
ng-shan
n-kuan
SKETCH MAP
of
NORTHERN AND CENTRAL
SZE CHUAN.
to illustrate Mount Omi & beyond
Showing Mr A.J.Little's journeys in 1892-1897.
Note.
Kiang-River. Shau-Mountain Range.
English Miles.
0 20 40 60 80 100
1 : 2,500,000 - 39.5 - 1 Inch.
Author's route.
29
28
110
111
F.S.Weller, F.R.G.S

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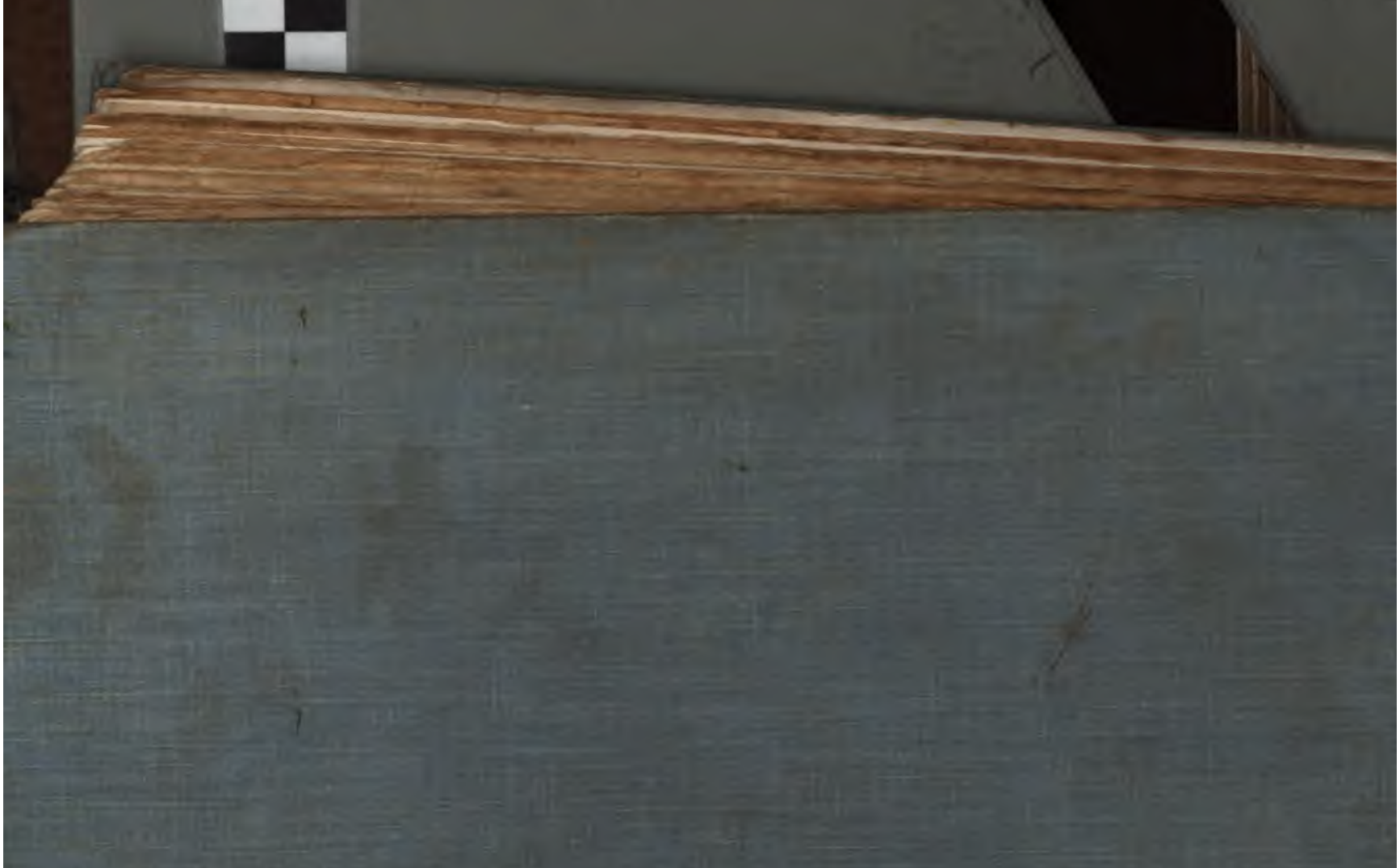
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